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The overdue demise of the United Nations

by Charles Krauthammer

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Open And Shut

> Openness . . . is the great insight of our times. . . . There is no enemy other than the man who is not open to everything. —Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*

Poor Joe Biden, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, is being savaged for his various statements about the nomination of Robert Bork for the Supreme Court. Long ago he said that if Bork were nominated, "I'd have to vote for him." When Bork actually was nominated, he said he would lead the opposition. In fact, he has admitted that regarding Bork, "I don't have an open mind" and it would be "dishonest" to claim otherwise.

So now conservatives are comparing Biden to the Red Queen of *Alice in Wonderland* and demanding that, having prejudged the issue, he should stand aside during the Senate confirmation process. Even Governor Mario Cuomo—chin-pulling reflectiveness personified, as always—has criticized Biden for reaching his conclusion about Bork before the Senate hearings have been held.

There are good reasons for concern about the condition of Biden's mind, but they don't relate to whether it is open or closed. Meanwhile, these complaints from conservatives are wonderfully hypocritical. The leading conservatives on the Judiciary Committee—Strom Thurmond, Orrin Hatch, Gordon Humphrey—have also made up their minds about Bork, and are not shy of saying so. Biden's mind is demonstrably more open than theirs, since he's changed it, much to their irritation.

Of course these complaints about Biden mirror liberal complaints about Bork. Biden himself complains that Bork lacks an "open mind" and has "a predisposition on every one of the major issues" that might come before the Supreme Court. He praises retiring Justice Lewis Powell for having said, "I never think of myself as having a judicial philosophy." Liberal interest groups accuse Bork of being "ideological." In response, conservatives accuse the liberals of "partisanship." President Reagan has taken to denying that his nominee has anything so nefarious as a judicial philosophy. He praises Bork for his "fairness," his "detachment," his "statesmanship." He says the issue is "qualifications" versus "politics." Bork himself says, "I don't consider myself a conservative."

Puhleez, you guys. Can't we at least have an honest debate here? The best you can say about all this malarkey is that both sides are confusing two issues. One is whether Bork and/or his critics are more interested in using the courts to achieve a laundry list of political results than in any particular theory of jurisprudence. That's a good question, on both sides. The other is whether it is illegitimate for Bork even to have such a theory, or for his opponents to disagree with it and oppose his nomination on that basis. That's silly: of course it's legitimate.

Robert Bork has taught and written about constitutional law for a quarter century. He has served six years on the nation's most important appellate court. If, after all this, he had failed to reach any conclusions about the major constitutional issues of our day, that would be evidence of an empty mind, not an open one. To suggest, as do his supporters, that Bork's views are unformed or unpredictable is an insult to his intellectual integrity.

But Americans shy away from ideological battle. "Ideological" is a name-calling word. So is "partisan" or "political." So is "close-minded" (meaning, you know what you think). Good things to be are "open-minded" (meaning, you don't know what you think), "balanced," and—above all—"moderate." The Bork war is being fought over possession of the linguistic territory of balance and moderation.

This notion of close-mindedness is much in the air these days, due to the title of Allan Bloom's bizarrely best-selling book. Actually, the title is misleading. Bloom, near as I can tell, opposes open-mindedness as a quality connected to moral relativism and the general decline of values. (However, this sort of open-mindedness mutates into close-mindedness in a process I'm either too dim-witted or too close-minded to understand.)

Boxes within boxes. Although Bork and Bloom are the two great conservative culture heroes of the moment, Bork's constitutional close-mindedness is exactly the kind of moral open-mindedness that Bloom deplores. Bork says he came to his narrow view of constitutional rights based on the conclusion that morality is just a matter of personal gratification and "there is no principled way to decide that one man's gratifications are more deserving of respect than another's." Bloom, by contrast, believes that broad moral precepts can be derived from natural law, and believes the Founders thought so too.

In an impressive article in the August 13 *New York Review of Books*, Professor Ronald Dworkin powerfully undermines Bork's contention that his constitutional views merely reflect the original intent of the document's authors. Even Bork, he notes, supports *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, the school desegregation case. (Bork, in fact, has called *Brown* one of "the Court's most splendid vindications of human freedom.") Yet the Congress that passed the 14th Amendment also maintained segregated schools in the District of Columbia.

Clearly, then, the notion of "original intent" must be read at some level of generality or *Brown* goes out the window (and with it, the Constitution's claims to be something more than the Founders' own menu of gratifications). Bork doesn't disagree. In fact, he said something similar himself in a Court of Appeals opinion defending broad First Amendment protection against libel suits even though (as Antonin Scalia pointed out in a steely dissent) libel suits were common at the time of the Founders. But Dworkin argues persuasively that Bork has never produced a theory to explain at what level of generality he chooses to interpret the Founders' intent, and why.

Is this asking too much? After all, nobody ever demanded a grand constitutional theory from Sandra Day O'Connor. On the other hand, O'Connor never claimed to have one that would justify undoing much of the constitutional jurisprudence of the past 25 years.

This debate seems to have gotten totally inverted, with Bork's opponents accusing him of having rigid judicial views and his supporters insisting that he's really a non-ideological moderate with no fixed opinions. That's crazy. Bork's challengers should be demanding: "OK, buddy, what's your theory? And make it a good one."

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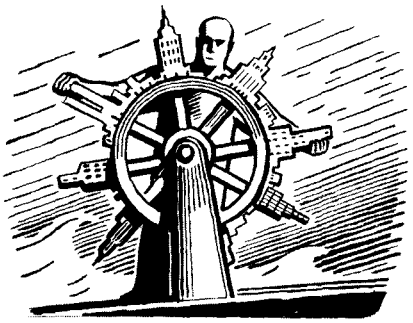

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CORRESPONDENCE

SILENT DUTY

To the editors:

In view of my military duty in the Republic of Korea, I found that "Korea Counseling" (July 13&20) captured the nuances of the political ferment. However, I disagree with the assumption behind your criticism that nothing "has . . . been heard from the U.S. military." That is exactly as it should be. The U.S. armed forces are in Korea to deter, and defend against, external aggression, not to offer suggestions on how best to implement democratic institutions. Had the commander in chief of U.S. Forces Korea, who is also commander in chief of the United Nations Command and the ROK/U.S. Combined Forces Command, spoken out and had events then proved him wrong, he would have been severely compromised in his role as a multinational commander. (In that same issue, in "The Colonel's Coup," Fareed Zakaria properly points out that the military "way of thinking is not well suited . . . to the management of foreign policy.") The U.S. military leaders did exactly the right thing; they kept their eyes open, their ears to the ground, and their mouths shut.

RANDALL N. BRIGGS
APO San Francisco, California

GENTLEMEN SOLDIERS

To the editors:

After a feeble acknowledgment that the death of a young man is "always painful and poignant," TNR counters that under the circumstances it was "of no special moral significance" in the case of Benjamin Linder ("Death of an American," July 6). We are all aware that in Nicaragua they are not playing by "Marquess of Queensberry rules." But when a U.S.-supported *contra* kills a wounded American citizen (as sources claim), we should pause and take note.

More disappointing is that TNR holds on so dearly to the tired and facile idea that if only Congress officially permitted the U.S. government to train the *contras*, they would suddenly become gentlemen soldiers. It's more than questionable that endless infusion of taxpayer money would ever transform the *contras* into a "disciplined soldiery." Idealism, however misdirected, should not be dismissed so quickly. History may ultimately side with Linder and the scraggly group of American volunteers still in Nicaragua trying to rebuild that country.

CHRISTOPHER TYREE
New York, New York

BACK TO THE U.S.S.R.

To the editors:

For the second time in two months, TNR has gravely warned American presidential candidates against listening to my analysis of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union. A Notebook item (July 13 & 20) distorts my May 30 speech in Moscow to the Seventh World Congress of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. The editorial accurately quotes my main theme: "American thinking about the Soviet Union . . . is now utterly militarized; as a nation we have lost the ability to think politically about the Soviet Union." But I have never believed or written the notion attributed to me in the editorial—"that any continuation of hostilities between the United States and the Soviet Union are entirely America's fault." Indeed, in my speech I emphasized that "this same kind of militarized policy and thinking" prevailed in Moscow until very recently. I criticized the American peace movement for ignoring "all the real political conflicts between the two countries." And I urged the Gorbachev leadership to make "specific Soviet proposals toward lessening all those U.S.-Soviet conflicts, from Europe and Afghanistan to the Middle East and Central America." In short, TNR falsified my analysis. Unable to respond to the substance of alternative ideas on U.S.-Soviet relations such as mine, TNR has resorted to distortion and political defamation in an effort to censor them.

STEPHEN F. COHEN
Princeton, New Jersey

The editors reply:

Mr. Cohen cites all the to-be-sure type sentences of his speech. In fact its "main theme," as he correctly calls it, was stated more strongly than we cited it: it was not only that American thinking about the Soviet Union is "completely militarized," but also that this militarization *"poses threats more grave than any posed*

continued on page 41

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
AUGUST 24, 1987

WORKFARE THAT WORKS

Until recently the "welfare consensus" had all the marks of a watershed as important as tax reform. Like tax reform, it was based on a clear realization that the present system helped almost no one, and on a simple political deal. Liberals swallowed the idea that welfare could entrench dependency and conservatives accepted that the state, through workfare, could transform the culture of poverty. To put it bluntly, it meant that conservatives would spend money if liberals reformed the programs.

But unlike tax reform, the welfare consensus is less a positive transformation of a corrupting system than a bid to avert social disaster. Its occasion was—and is—the imminent death of the American family. The statistics tell the story. Only 39 percent of American children get to the age of 18 with both natural parents in their home. Median family income has stabilized and even declined for a decade now. Poverty rates are still higher than they were 20 years ago, despite economic growth, and largely because of the fracturing of families. Those hardest hit are women and children. Women now make up a hefty majority of poor adults, and children are by far the poorest section of society. The poverty rate for the under-sixes is seven times that of the over-sixties. In simplest terms, the emerging shape of the needy American family is one woman surrounded by a batch of poor kids. It is estimated that by the turn of the century, some 70 percent of black families in America will look like this.

So much is now calmly understood. So are the enduring attitudes that this culture of dependency and delinquency creates. It is hard to quantify the emotional and psychological costs borne by a generation of children whose fathers are never there, and whose mothers are under continual stress. It is even harder to propose a solution that is both effective and compassionate. But what cannot be doubted is the moral urgency to do something substantial, now.

Despite the new consensus, however, virtually nothing is being done. Although Massachusetts and California have set up modest but successful programs, the workfare revolution is still a long way off elsewhere. It is estimated that only one percent of current welfare recipients are in workfare programs. Overall, funding for work and training programs was cut by 50 percent in real terms in the five years from 1981 to 1986. Meanwhile, some two million children, mostly minorities, now live in families that have survived on welfare checks for a decade or more.

In this context, Senator Daniel P. Moynihan's Family Security Act was bound to arouse great expectations, higher perhaps than was either feasible or fair. Moynihan has been warning about the breakdown of families for two decades, and has had the satisfaction of seeing his views go the full circle from the outrageous to the banal. His bill's greatest achievement is simply to write the new workfare understanding into law. It firmly states that job-training, education, and various forms of workfare should be compulsory for anyone on welfare. It targets those who are most likely to benefit (young mothers, recidivists). It places the responsibility for parenthood back on the parents, especially absent fathers, who would be more closely tracked for child payments. It reduces the perverse incentive for family breakup by giving two-parent homes the same benefits as one-parent ones. It eases the transition to work by providing Medicaid coverage during the transition and after. And it affirms that day care is an essential component of any program.

Still, it is hard to avoid a sense of anti-climax. Moynihan's act, by his own admission, is modest. He cites the bill's low federal costs ($87 million in the first year) as a distinct virtue, and points out the practical difficulties of setting up vast new programs. Given this, the program will only reach about 75,000 more people than the present system. In other words, this welfare "breakthrough" means a one percent increase in current welfare expenditure to help an extra two percent of welfare recipients. This amid rhetoric reminding us: "Pray God, this time, we don't let the children down."

Moynihan's measures, in short, hardly match his rhetoric, or the scale of the crisis. On close inspection, his grand compromise turns into a bland one. The heart of the problem is that the approach relies on the states to initiate programs, which the federal government will then help

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finance, as long as the programs adhere to the provisions of the bill. (For every dollar the states spend on their workfare programs, the federal government will add 90 cents for the first $140 million and 60 cents for every dollar above that.) Some of this makes sense: feasible workfare schemes need to be worked out on the ground first. And the bill's provision allowing up to ten states to exempt themselves from the program if they're trying out new schemes of their own encourages useful policy innovation.

The catch is that the low federal cost anticipated for the entire program implies that the states won't attempt anything substantial on their own. And because of the federal government's matching-funds approach, it has no way to force them or to finance programs itself directly. Inevitably, it's the states with the neediest poor that have the strongest inertia record, and it's the people most in need of the programs who are least likely to get them.

Moynihan has also watered down the elements of reform that most break the culture of dependency. The bill doesn't set a time limit on work training for participants in its new workfare program, despite the fact that "training" ad infinitum leads to precisely the kind of dependency workfare was supposed to end. Nor does the bill guarantee a job at the end of such training. And it lets mothers stay off workfare if their kids are under three, when six months would be a tougher dependency-breaking option. This one stipulation exempts an estimated 40 percent of welfare recipients. On top of this, the bill rightly allows mothers to exempt themselves from workfare if day care is not provided, but at the same time acknowledges that the states are unlikely to provide much day care. This single loophole could exempt virtually all welfare mothers in the poorer states, where day care is a pipe dream.

The reasons for these concessions are largely political:

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

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5.	A HERO FOR OUR TIME	*	7
6.	PRESIDENT HEADROOM	*	15
7.	DUSK'S EARLY LIGHT	*	4
8.	THE LEFT PICTURE SHOW	—	1
9.	NOSTALGIE DE LA FUMÉE	*	7
10.	CAN'T BUY A THRILL	—	1

1. THE ENEMY BELOW

The Gulf. All the elements for a classic Reagan media splash are there: confrontation with a raving Iran, Euro-wimp allies, rioting Shiites, etc. But it probably won't happen—short of war. Undermining him are disappointment with an expensive but poorly planned military (ZC, passim) and his failure to articulate his Gulf policy. If reflagging was intended as superpower role-playing, it is falling short.

2. SHREDDED FEAT

Iranamok. Conspiratorialists now occupy the post-hearing, pre-indictment entr'acte. The mainstream conspiracy theory, based on Shultz's testimony, is that Reagan's been awake all along. But far more sweeping cloak-and-dagger scenarios are hitting print. True or not, they indicate real frustration with the uncracked case, and a long future of sifting through its unshredded litter.

3. MAD TO THE MAX

Freeway shootings. The freeway shootings story may have begun as a garden variety "crazy L.A." piece, but it was immediately swallowed by two of the culture's favorite standbys: guns and cars. The car angle, in a pretense of seriousness, leaped from L.A. car mania to freeway overload and then to problematic urban planning. But this story is really just about a couple of psychotics and their crazy copycats.

4. ADVISE AND CONTEND

Bork. Reagan's handling of the Bork nomination has Washington's right wing indignant: he's done little to promote Bork or his views, and is even painting him as a Powell-like moderate. Anti-Bork forces, meanwhile, are toning down their rhetoric. Rather than screaming that he'll restore slavery, they are focusing their opposition on Bork's "majoritarianism," which at least provides the makings of a useful debate.

5. A HERO FOR OUR TIME

Glasnost. If any single theme has emerged from the recent ocean of copy evaluating *glasnost*, it's that Gorbachev is fated to be the Soviet Sisyphus. However heroic his efforts to revitalize the lethargic Soviet economy, the weight of a hopelessly entrenched bureaucracy will defeat him. Maybe. Soviet leaders rarely become tragic figures in the West until they're dead. This is a real p.r. achievement.

6. PRESIDENT HEADROOM

1988. The Babbitt-du Pont debate-by-satellite (ZC, July 6) really was a harbinger of video politics to come. Virtually every candidate is pouring money into tape packages and local satellite feeds now. The savvier among them will be far more in control of their media pictures, and for the first time should be able to offset any negative network news line that develops.

7. DUSK'S EARLY LIGHT

Britainization. News of the U.S.'s decline has moved on to magazine covers. The *Atlantic* argues that the U.S. simply can't afford its post-war military obligations anymore, a subject that has been simmering in the European press for a while. Gore Vidal may have always thought the U.S. was going down the toilet, but now he gets to say so in *Newsweek*.

8. THE LEFT PICTURE SHOW

Left culture. The op-ed page didn't notice, but *Platoon* has had a pop cult successor. Nah, not the Kubrick film. *Robocop*, the futuristic crowd pleaser, is an up-front attack on Reaganist privatization and corporate greed; it even knocks off both Reagan and Nixon in a throwaway scene. A surprise box-office success, *Robocop* marks another stage in the renewed marketability of dissident ideas.

9. NOSTALGIE DE LA FUMÉE

Smoking. Models in some artsy fashion ads are now enveloped in clouds of cigarette smoke, while many ciggie ads are also getting non-verbal and artsy. Because smoking is now barely tolerated by much of the middle class (and because lower classes still smoke), it may be emerging as anti-bourgeois and even avant-garde.

10. CAN'T BUY A THRILL

Sports. Poor U.S. performance in international tennis competition has been a matter of concern all year. Now lousy finishes by U.S. golfers are raising worries in that field, too. All that's needed now is for the Expos to meet the Blue Jays in the World Series.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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Moynihan wants to keep the costs down to please the White House, the loopholes in to please the Democrats, and the lack of federal compulsion to please the governors. What's lost in all of this is the original will to call a right-left, federal-states truce to tackle the problem head-on.

But this is no reason to reject the bill. A little is better than nothing, and the tortured history of welfare reform shows the necessity of seizing any moment that presents itself, however meager. But now that the legislative wrangling has begun, there's still time to move toward a more ambitious deal. Liberals should close the workfare loopholes (limit open-ended training; remove states' waivers; reduce the three-year grace period for new mothers to six months), and end the easy out for states. Conservatives should swallow their day-care objections, realize that the toughened bill is close enough to their aim of breaking welfare dependency to call a political victory, and agree to invest the federal funds necessary to make it work. Real welfare reform (with day care) will cost money, but if the scale of the crisis is explained, we believe that there is great public support for such expenditure. In our view, it is the least that should be attempted.

Unfortunately, it probably won't be. Only four Republicans co-sponsored the bill. Robert Dole seems to be more worried about the presidency than the underclass, and factions in the preoccupied White House are stuck on a concept of federalism that they know means inaction. On the left, a tiny but vocal minority of liberals, stuck in the attitudes of the past, are now crying simply for more money, or retreating to the language of "welfare rights" to oppose tough work requirements. It is hard to know where the original welfare consensus has gone these days, but if this chance for watershed reform is missed, it may not soon come again. By then it could be too late. For several million American women and children, it's too late already.

Pressing The Saudis

We shall never know the facts about the bloody events in Mecca. The leaders of all the Arab states have endorsed the official Saudi version, but this is no guarantee of its accuracy. Except for Syria, all the regimes in the region represent the Sunni urban elites, and thus constitute a fraternity with the Saudi royal house. The stirring of the rural Shiite underclass—in Iraq, Bahrain, Dubai, Kuwait, Lebanon, and the oil-producing provinces of Saudi Arabia—is a threat to the millennium-long Sunni dominion over the world of Islam, particularly at its Arab epicenter. That this perilous Shiite insurgency in Arab lands was inspired not by local Shiites but by the despised Persians shows the abysmal failure of nation-building among Arabs. To the Shiites, in fact, this nation-building has seemed just another mask for sectarian Sunni supremacy. Even theology aside (a very big aside among Muslims), the Shiite grievance is real and deep.

Not surprisingly, the State Department too has trooped into line behind the official version from Mecca. The Ayatollah, with his bloodcurdling incantations, has given us no incentive to be skeptical of the Sunni rendition of reality. Still, with no fewer than 402 dead (the number put out by the authorities), there is something a bit too breezy in the State Department's assertion that "the Saudi government has shown itself capable of handling its internal affairs." Four hundred dead: some capability. And Arab governments tend to be inventive with political casualty figures. (Precision is meant to compensate for speciousness, as with the preposterous calculus of 9,583 people killed and 16,608 wounded during the first days of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.) Mecca's count may well turn out to be far too low, and the cause of the bloodletting somewhat less simple than the mullahs' want for martyrs. Small but critical differences have already emerged even in the reports from the regime's own news agency. We have seen in our own culture how axiomatic the vernacular of deceit and cover-up can become. In the Middle East the official forked tongue is now the norm.

None of the dispatches about the killing at Islam's holiest place came from Saudi Arabia. It is a little-noticed fact that there is no permanent Western press presence in the country widely touted as the West's one indispensable friend in the region. (Even if Western reporters were permitted to stay in the country, there wouldn't have been any stories from Mecca, which is off-limits to non-Muslims.) The regime has no desire for too many Westerners to get to know the country. Journalists would inevitably begin reporting not only on its idiosyncratic features—women, for example, are forbidden to drive—but on the extent to which its populace does not really constitute a nation at all. A corollary of this is the precarious legitimacy of the dynasty itself.

For a long time now Washington has tried to convince Riyadh of the need to base matériel and some personnel on Saudi soil. After all, these are in the region, in great measure, for the protection of the Wahabi line and its friends. But we may have an even greater interest in establishing the right of the U.S. media to base its correspondents in Saudi Arabia. Then, at least, the public would have some awareness not only of the self-designated Iranian enemy but also of the designated Saudi friend. The strategic case for the Saudis to align themselves meaningfully with the Western nations, against both the Soviet Union and Iran, has long been obvious. But they will almost certainly continue to play Hamlet in the Gulf.

Notebook

□ RED AND BROWN: Try to imagine a great American university establishing a sister association—joint conferences, joint publications—with the Central Intelligence Agency. The idea is rightly unimaginable. The American academy may even be a bit overzealous in impeding its professors from doing scholarly work subsidized by gov-

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ernment defense or intelligence agencies. What, then, should one make of the agreement signed by Brown University, through its Center for Foreign Policy Development, establishing just such a sister association with the Soviet Union's official Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada? IUSAC is no organization of independent scholars. It functions precisely like units of the CIA, conducting research—but also collecting intelligence and disseminating disinformation. Georgi Arbatov's IUSAC is not part of the international republic of learning. In fact, institutionally protected independent scholarship does not exist in the Soviet Union. What distinguishes Arbatov from Marshall Shulman—or Vladimir Posner from Sam Donaldson—is that in both cases the former is actually an official spokesman. These men are flacks: subtle maybe, smooth certainly, but flacks nonetheless. Thomas J. Watson couldn't quite see through the fog when he was our ambassador in Moscow. He still can't. But he is an immensely rich and powerful Brown alumnus. The center is, more or less, his creation, founded on his benefactions. The agreement with Arbatov was his negotiation. The skeptical intelligence of academics is nowhere in evidence. So an American university, whose faculty would never contemplate too close a relationship with U.S. government agencies, has joined its reputation and research to a prime organ of propaganda of the Soviet Union.

□ TAKE THIS JOB AND SHOVE IT. NO, ON SECOND THOUGHT . . . : Three times, George Shultz testified, he threatened to resign as secretary of state, and three times he was dissuaded. Is there a pattern here? In the 1960s Shultz was dean of the University of Chicago Business School. According to a 1970 profile by A. H. Raskin in the *New York Times Magazine*, Shultz forbade the organizers of a campus anti-war rally to use loudspeakers, but was overruled by university president Edward Levi (later attorney general). Shultz—can you guess?—"resigned forthwith. It took two days of pleading by . . . faculty Brahmins . . . to induce Shultz to stay." We are not psychiatrists, but we wonder whether these repeated episodes should be treated, like repeated failed suicide attempts, less as sincere efforts to quit and more as a plea for help.

□ FAIRNESS: The Federal Communications Commission voted on August 4 to repeal the "fairness doctrine"—its policy requiring broadcasters to present all sides of controversial public issues. This is part of the commission's larger deregulation crusade during the Reagan years, which has led to the repeal of rules restricting sales of stations, limiting advertising time, requiring detailed study of a licensee's "character," and so on. In general we favor deregulation, including deregulation of the communications industry. In a media-saturated society, government meddling is not needed to assure a diversity of voices. But the FCC's free market spirit is oddly limited. Those restrictions, most of them silly, were the quid pro quo for receiving fantastically valuable broadcast licenses absolutely free. While eager to free broadcasters of the constraints of licensing, the FCC has made no effort to end the giveaway. As a result of this half-deregulation, for example, people now receive free radio licenses based on elaborate promises to serve community interests (or, more commonly, based simply on being black and/or female), then turn around and sell them almost immediately for millions of dollars. Half-deregulation may have some philosophical basis, but the thought also occurs to us that broadcast licensees tend to be rich, politically influential, and Republican.

□ CORRECTION: Due to an editing confusion, Walter Laqueur's article, "Glasnost Ghosts" (TNR, August 3), inaccurately carried a Moscow dateline.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BRINGING UP BABY

JUST BEFORE LUNCHTIME on July 30, President Reagan delivered a 20-minute speech to a roomful of anti-abortion activists. Given Reagan's opposition to abortion, you might have guessed that this was a regular event, a routine massaging of a faithful constituency group. Oddly enough, it was the first time in the six-plus years of the Reagan presidency that right-to-lifers had been invited to the White House to hear a presidential address. Reagan didn't let them down. He offered up "especially good news, a set of initiatives that we will pursue immediately." These included a cutoff of funds to family planning clinics that "provide counseling and referral for abortion services," and a new report by the surgeon general on the physical and emotional effects of abortion on women.

Until late the day before, none of these initiatives was in the draft of Reagan's speech. Nor was the president even aware of them. They were inserted in the text—and thus became official administration policy—at the last moment only as a result of clever political maneuvering by a few White House aides. Reagan wasn't consulted. The thinking was that he needn't be bothered. "These aren't policies that normally raise red flags with him," explained a senior White House aide. The president was simply presented with a final text that included the new measures. "He just read them," the aide said, and gladly accepted the cheers of the anti-abortion crowd.

The maneuvering by White House officials began after the July 2 firing of Jo Ann Gasper from the Department of Health and Human Services. She was dismissed as deputy assistant secretary for population affairs for refusing to renew $30,000 in grants to Planned Parenthood. Her closest ally at the White House, domestic policy adviser Gary Bauer, interceded on her behalf and arranged a compromise under which the grants would be renewed only tem-

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porarily. But she wouldn't go along. Her ouster, not surprisingly, enraged right-to-life leaders and their allies in Congress. Complaints poured into the White House, raising worries that the pro-lifers might abandon the Republican Party in the 1988 election.

This presented conservatives at the White House (Bauer, domestic policy "coordinator" Kenneth Cribb, and Carl Anderson, the acting director of the office of public liaison) with an opportunity. They argued that Reagan should assuage the anti-abortionists personally by talking to them at the White House. Howard Baker, the White House chief of staff, readily agreed with this, and so did the president. The invitation to meet with Reagan calmed the right-to-lifers. But that was only the beginning. At the White House, Reagan's appearance became, in the words of one of the conservatives, an "action-forcing event." The president must have something to say. Boasting about his support for a constitutional amendment banning abortion, an amendment with no chance of becoming law, wouldn't do.

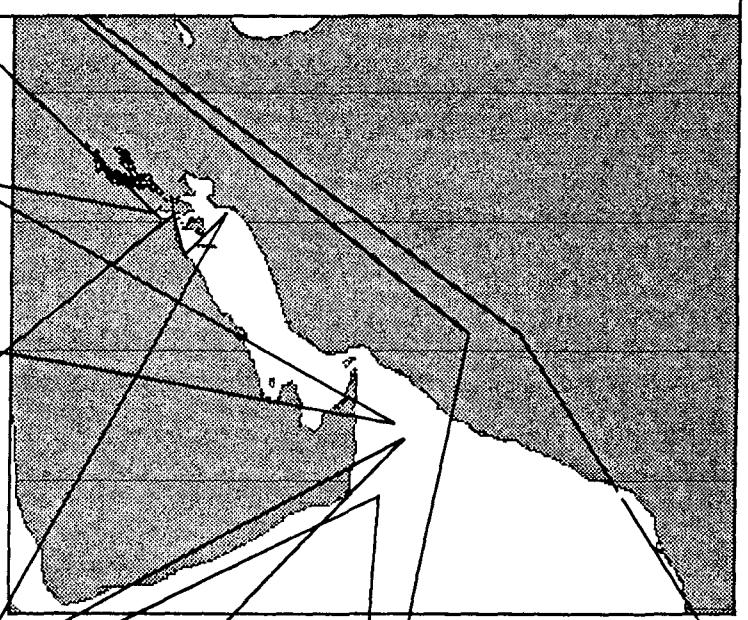
The aide with the best ideas, it turned out, was Dinesh D'Souza, 26, who was the managing editor of the Heritage Foundation's publication, *Policy Review*, before he joined the White House staff last April. D'Souza is one of the most prominent of the younger generation of American conservatives, but he isn't an American citizen. He came to the United States from India in 1978 as a high school exchange student, then went to Dartmouth (where he was editor of the conservative *Dartmouth Review*). He won't be eligible for citizenship until next year. Anyway, he circulated a memo outlining a "new pro-life strategy."

The core of the strategy is to concentrate not on the issue of abortion's legality, but on the one "area of agreement between the two parties in the abortion debate," namely that abortion is morally undesirable. The administration should treat abortion like smoking, D'Souza said in the memo. "Smoking is legal. One can even talk about a right to smoke. But that is by no means inconsistent with government efforts to discourage people from smoking, everything from surgeon general warnings to segregated facilities for smokers to taxes imposed on cigarettes. There is no reason not to adopt a similar approach with abortion. Within a framework of legal abortion, the government can take a number of steps to discourage women from having abortions."

D'Souza cited a half dozen. At the top of the list was the issuance of a pamphlet by the surgeon general on "the medical hazards of abortion." He also suggested defunding groups that promote abortions and funding those "that help with adoption or carrying pregnancy to term." A milder recommendation was that a White House conference be held on "abortion alternatives." And he went so far as to urge that the tax deduction for abortion medical expenses be eliminated because "it constitutes a tax subsidy for abortion." D'Souza's smoking analogy falters on the subsidy issue, since the federal government openly subsidizes tobacco growers and has never tried to kill the tax

Reflagging: The Secret NSC Agenda

As the debate rages on over reflagging neutral vessels in the Persian Gulf, it is well worth wondering what role, if any, will be played by the Boys with the Key-Shaped Cakes. According to a memo THE NEW REPUBLIC obtained from self-appointed national security adviser Dan Halberstein, we have only seen the tip of a six-stage reflagging proposal. The remainder of the proposal is outlined below.



Stage 1
Reflag Kuwaiti and other neutral Gulf vessels on request.

Stage 2
Reflag hostile vessels — Syrian, Libyan, and even Soviet — by force, if necessary.

Stage 3
Capture and reflag Iranian and Iraqi vessels with one another's flags, then send them home, under fire from their own air forces. May increase sales of air-to-surface missiles in the region.

Stage 4
Reflag American ships with Chinese flags to deter attack by Iranian units armed with Chinese-made Silkworm missiles.

Stage 5.
Reflag older American units with the skull and crossbones, sink them, and claim a blow against international terrorism.

Stage 6.
Reflag selected units with the Swiss flag, just to give everybody food for thought.

Dan Halberstein is a free-lance humorist based in Washington, D.C.

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deduction for cigarette or cigar advertising. In any case, the proposal to make abortion non-deductible was brushed aside by senior White House aides as too controversial. D'Souza, by the way, refused to discuss the memo with me.

The idea of cutting off pro-abortion groups like Planned Parenthood was not a new one. But enlisting Surgeon General C. Everett Koop was. D'Souza knows Koop, who is a Dartmouth graduate, has contributed financially to the *Dartmouth Review*, and is strongly anti-abortion. Better yet, Koop has credibility outside the conservative movement because of his public fight against mandatory AIDS testing. Koop won't be doing exactly what D'Souza had in mind, but excerpts from his report on abortion can easily be put in pamphlet form. "Of all the initiatives, the most important may end up being Koop's study," says Bauer. "The reason is that, unfortunately, we now have a type of abortion culture. Millions of women have had abortions, and even if we could change the law tomorrow to make abortion illegal, there's every reason to believe that a large number of individuals would resist a change. We need to change people's hearts about abortion, to explain why it is a bad thing even if it is temporarily a legal thing."

The Koop study was an easy sell for Bauer and his allies. Who could be against a study, for heaven's sake? The trick was getting approval for changing the regulations to defund those who give abortion counseling or referrals. The changes would go well beyond the ban, legislated years ago, on direct federal financing of abortions. They would bar federal money to any program that, in Reagan's words, "encourages, promotes, or advocates abortion, or which assists a woman in obtaining an abortion." To comply with the new regulations, programs that take federal funds for family planning while providing abortion counseling from private funds would have to separate the two services, in different buildings or at least in different rooms. On July 23 Bauer and Cribb called in lawyers from HHS, the Justice Department, and the White House and asked for a quick finding that the president has authority to make the changes on his own. At one time, the administration must have thought Reagan didn't, since it sought to get similar changes passed legislatively. Congress refused. The lawyers were told to get back with their answer in a few days. "If you give them long periods of time to do these things, they'll come up with the wrong answer," a White House official said.

By July 28 they had come up with the right one. The next morning Bauer and Cribb discussed the whole issue with Tom Griscom, the White House communications director, and Rhett Dawson, the staff secretary. For the first time, they encountered resistance. A blank spot had been left in the draft of Reagan's speech the next day to the right-to-lifers, but Griscom and Dawson were leery of plugging in the new initiatives. Dawson indicated the issue was too important to be rushed through. Griscom raised a telling question. If these were such simple changes in the regulations, why hadn't the White House ordered them before? After all, Reagan had been in office for more than six years, expressing his opposition to abortion all the while. Griscom never got a satisfactory answer to this question.

He had another worry. Bauer and Cribb assured him that HHS Secretary Otis Bowen was on board with the changes, but Griscom had his doubts. Bowen had fired Gasper because she balked at the current regulations, so his sudden willingness to change them was suspect. Griscom wondered if the new language in the regulations that had been shown to Bowen was the same as that shown to everyone else. To make sure, Bowen was summoned for a private meeting with Howard Baker. No, Bowen said, he wasn't being rolled. Still, White House aides figured that Bowen was merely wary of tangling with the anti-abortion lobby again. In any case, Reagan was able to say in his speech that Bowen "is fully supportive of my position on abortion and of these initiatives." More initiatives may be coming. Griscom, among others, is taken with the idea of having the president promote adoption as an alternative to abortion. While vacationing at his California ranch in late August or early September, Reagan may announce a task force to recommend ways to increase adoptions.

The abortion initiatives point up two final things. One is the reason why the Reagan White House, even in its diminished circumstances since Iranamok broke, continues to attract a steady stream of talent. Sure, young conservatives are eager for a White House credential to give them a leg up in getting a senior position in the next Republican administration. But that's not the only reason. More important is the power that only the White House has. Two months into his junior-level job, D'Souza was spurring a policy change. He couldn't have done that on Capitol Hill or at the Heritage Foundation.

The other point is about Reagan. He is weakened, aged, and sometimes disconsolate, and his influence over Congress is minimal. But he is not entirely powerless. He can promulgate executive orders, tinker with regulations, etc. If someone presents him with a nice conservative idea that he can implement on his own, he's likely to jump at the chance. But, as ever, someone has to do the presenting first.

FRED BARNES

POSTCARD POLAND

ANOTHER COUNTRY

THE MOST POPULAR political button in Poland shows 11 red dashes on a white background. For those in the know, its implication is clear: "SOLIDARNOSC," which once appeared on thousands of similar buttons, has been censored. But Polish censorship is more selective these days. A group of university professors, free-lance writers, and dissidents in Warsaw have just published the first non-state, non-Church magazine ever to appear legally in an East bloc nation. Its editor, Martin Krol, explained that

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the new *Res Publica* ("the public interest") "simply could not have been published ten years ago. Its very existence testifies to the new and strange situation we have found ourselves in."

Res Publica has appeared illegally since the late 1970s, but in March of this year its editors received official permission to publish. Their two-year battle with the Polish bureaucracy came to an end with the assistance of Minister of Culture Alexander Krawcuk and government spokesman Jerzy Urban, who decided that *Res Publica* should be brought above ground. Krawcuk and Urban helped in obtaining paper and printing space (both chronically short in Warsaw) as well as permits, and refrained from making preliminary editorial suggestions. Krol also intends to maintain financial independence from the government, the Church, and even the remnants of the Solidarity union. He turned down money from the National Endowment for Democracy, wanting to avoid any taint of American influence. He says the magazine will survive on subscriptions and sales. With this decision, journalism supported by the capitalist means of production returns to Warsaw.

THE ARTICLES in the first issue range from an analysis of Socrates' understanding of morality and politics to an interview with the late Russian émigré film director Andrei Tarkovsky on the subjects of art, religion, and life in the West. Its central set of essays, collectively entitled "Another Country," openly discusses the virtual transformation of Poland's political culture since Solidarity's demise in 1981. Krol's goal, announced in the lead editorial, is to create a magazine that honestly discusses and actively encourages the increasing pluralism in all aspects of Polish life.

At the same time, *Res Publica*'s eclectic contents and attempted independence do not make it unique, even in Poland. Dozens of similar, albeit illegal, publications on a wide variety of political, economic, religious, and cultural topics can be found lying openly on coffee tables throughout the country. Bound editions of classic and contemporary Polish and Western writers, cassette tapes of popular bands, short videos made for Polish VCRs, and photographic essays featuring pictures from the Solidarity years also appear regularly from unknown sources. Since December's general amnesty, no one has gone to jail for such activity, although distributors of contraband items are occasionally subject to large government fines. In order to offset this hardship, the six largest underground press companies have put together a crude underground insurance company, popularly known as Lloyd's of Warsaw, which reimburses its members from a common fund.

The truth is that the legal appearance of *Res Publica* represents the culmination, not the inauguration, of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski's quietly aggressive campaign to lure intellectuals back into the mainstream. He began by setting up a "consultative council" last November, hoping to convince the Catholic leadership to work with him. In March Krawcuk praised the contributions of dissident writers to Poland's intellectual health. On April 21 Jaruzelski went to Moscow for a day to sign a cultural treaty with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The two called for a "public examination of the blank spots in our history," a statement since interpreted by Polish historians—occasionally on national television—to include the Katyn massacres, the Hitler-Stalin pact, the deportation of Poles after World War II, and the era of Polish Stalinism, all subjects considered taboo since the '50s.

JARUZELSKI'S liberalization campaign comes at a moment when intellectual unity could hardly be called a threat to the regime. Arguments over tea or vodka no longer revolve around the question of who is with us and who is not, but are over how to know when someone is collaborating at all. The distinctions often seem arbitrary at best. The state-owned Foksal art gallery has been declared "clean" by the opposition art community, while the state-owned Zacheta gallery remains subject to a strict boycott. Actors who have refused to perform in the national theaters since 1981 are beginning to return, citing the lack of alternative funds to produce the classics. The Polish millionaires who have made their fortunes from vegetables and flowers grown in privately built greenhouses are alternately envied for their entrepreneurship and vilified for cooperating with "the system."

The role of the Catholic Church in Polish intellectual life remains even more ambiguous, as many of those who joined in 1981 slowly drift away. "Weeks of Christian culture" are still held periodically across the country, and daily 5 p.m. mass is standing room only. Yet Jerzy Turowicz, a leading Catholic writer and publisher, concedes that in recent months the number of practicing Catholics has fallen. Those within the Church proclaim themselves happy to see the unbelievers go, and those who have left point out the hypocrisy of some artists, writers, and architects who continue to use Church money and institutional support for their own goals. According to Krol, *Res Publica*'s second issue will criticize Catholic nationalism and some of the more medieval aspects of Church hierarchy.

Still, as Westernized architects build a postmodern church in central Warsaw, it becomes hard to know if those who equate the "red" (government) with the "dark" (Church) are right in calling Catholicism conservative. "In Poland," points out Jacek Kochanowicz of Warsaw University, "there is nothing to conserve." Liberalism is also a problematic concept in a country where Milton Friedman is hot underground student literature and unemployment is illegal.

In fact, few labels in Poland carry the connotations one would expect. *Res Publica*, despite its legal status and high-level supporters, bears the fingerprints of those who permit its publication. Throughout the issue someone has left a trail of dashed out quotations, each accompanied by a sentence politely citing the precise number of the law prohibiting that particular idea. Poland may have become "another country," but it is hard to know which one.

ANNE APPLEBAUM

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Lawrence Walsh, the ultimate hired gun.

HAVE BRIEF, WILL TRAVEL

WHEN LAWRENCE E. WALSH, age 75, was named Iranamok special prosecutor in December, many people thought his long-standing ties to the Republican Party—he's worked for Tom Dewey, Dwight Eisenhower, and Richard Nixon—would make it impossible for him to conduct a hard-hitting investigation. But Walsh, whom friends call "Ed" (his middle name is Edward) and subordinates call "Judge" (he was one), is anything but an ideologue or partisan hack. He takes seriously the lawyer's responsibility to act as a zealous advocate for whoever's paying the bills. In this case, his client is the panel of federal judges that appointed him. His mission: to investigate and prosecute criminal and civil wrongdoing in Iranamok. And that's just what he's doing. "The guy is really a tiger," one investigation staffer says. "If anything, the staff has held him back.... He's here to prosecute."

Walsh has set up shop in a new luxury office building near the White House, where he heads a staff that includes 26 young lawyers, 35 FBI agents, 11 IRS agents, and four customs agents. He came under some criticism for housing his team in such extravagant digs. But Walsh says the building was selected by the General Services Administration. "I just do what I'm told."

Not quite. Walsh's independence as special prosecutor is precisely what Ollie North is worried about. Walsh isn't. Even though he's spent the last 25 years as a high-priced corporate defender, he doesn't feel uncomfortable leading a major criminal investigation: "In both jobs, you have to know the facts," he says. "If I'm called in to defend a corporation or its officers, or if I'm called in to prosecute them, the work is very much the same—I conduct an investigation to find out what the facts are."

Attorney General Ed Meese's petition for a special prosecutor asked for someone with substantial knowledge and experience in foreign, national security, defense, and intelligence policy. Walsh's only claim to such expertise rests in the few months he spent as Henry Cabot Lodge's assistant at the Paris Peace Talks beginning on Inauguration Day 1969. His title was "personal representative of the president," but he was really there to serve as the eyes and ears of his old friend, Secretary of State William P. Rogers.

Walsh and Rogers became friends in the late 1930s while working together in the offices of Manhattan's up-and-coming district attorney, Thomas E. Dewey. Walsh followed Governor Dewey to Albany, but Rogers moved on to Washington. Deputy Attorney General Rogers helped Walsh get his lifetime appointment to the federal bench in 1954. Attorney General Rogers lured him away three years later to serve as No. 2 man at the Justice Department during the last years of the Eisenhower administration.

After the 1960 election, Walsh entered the world of corporate lawyerdom a star. He became a partner at the high-powered Wall Street firm of Davis, Polk, and Wardwell. He also became active in the local bar—serving as its president for one year—and chaired a few local commissions. Then Rogers got Walsh the prestigious Paris appointment. Though he didn't resign the post officially until November 1969, Walsh returned stateside in June. He would have been better off staying in Europe. In the interim, he chaired the ABA panel that approved Nixon's doomed nominations of Clement Haynsworth and G. Harold Carswell to the Supreme Court.

Today he defends his support of Haynsworth, though he concedes his panel's approval of Carswell was a "mistake." Both were opposed for their reactionary views on civil rights and civil liberties; Carswell was also attacked for gross incompetence. And Haynesworth was criticized for having failed, as a lower-court judge, to recuse himself from several cases involving companies that had dealings with a business he partly owned. "There was no problem of conflict," Walsh said at the time, because Haynsworth had no direct monetary interest in the outcome of the individual cases. Meanwhile, Walsh found himself embroiled in a conflict-of-interest problem of his own, because he was still officially on Nixon's staff while he was approving these nominations on behalf of the ABA. When this conflict was raised then, Walsh said: "It would be no favor to the president to mislead him"—a clever but hardly accurate characterization of the issue.

Two years later, Walsh's Nixon connection got him into hot water again. The Justice Department had a particularly aggressive antitrust chief, Richard McLaren, whose special target was conglomerate mergers in general and ITT in particular. Under Harold Geneen, ITT had undertaken a merger blitzkrieg in which its assets increased fivefold. The crowning achievement was to be the acquisition of the $1.9 billion Hartford Fire Insurance Company. As Justice's suit to break up ITT headed toward the Supreme Court, ITT launched a massive lobbying campaign inside the administration to call off the hunt. Enter Lawrence Walsh.

Davis, Polk had long been ITT's outside counsel, but had not handled any of the three federal antitrust cases. Walsh was no antitrust expert and had done little work for ITT in the past. Nonetheless, Geneen called upon him to persuade Justice to delay or drop the Supreme Court appeal. Why? Perhaps because Walsh's role as head of the ABA's judicial screening panel brought him into constant contact with Justice Department higher-ups, in particular Deputy Attorney General Richard Kleindeinst, the acting attorney general for the ITT cases. Kleindeinst considered Walsh to be a good friend, and relied on him for ABA approval of nominees to the federal bench. Indeed, Walsh had done the administration's dirty work on behalf of Haynsworth and Carswell. And, of course, Walsh had served as a high-level Nixon appointee. Furthermore, neither Kleindeinst nor

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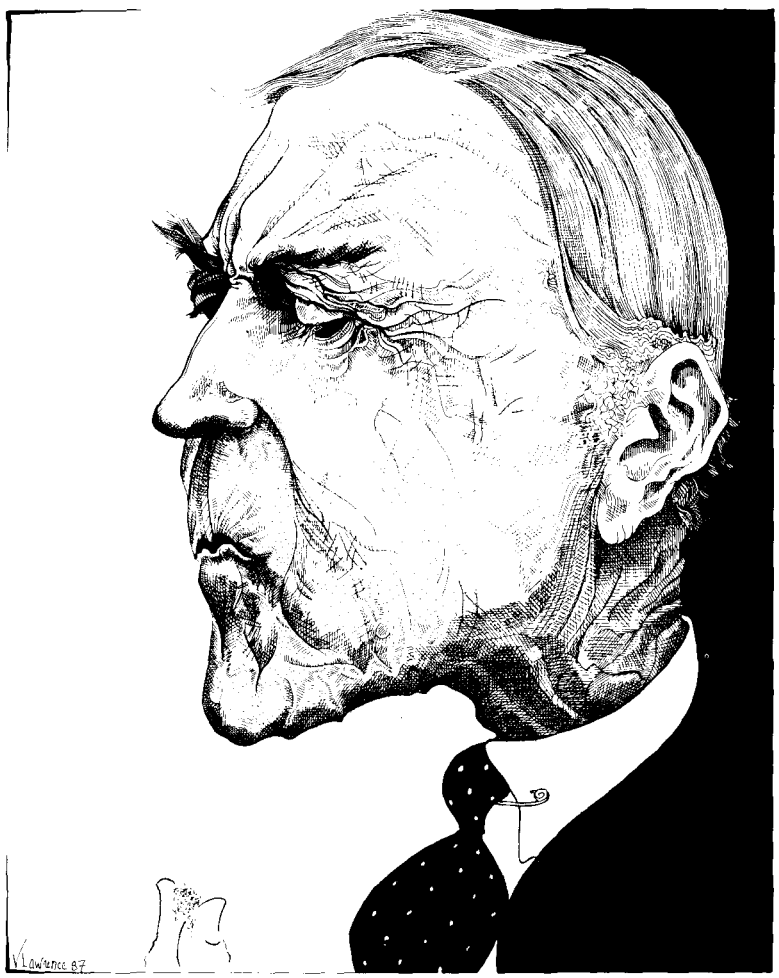
McLaren had made a secret of their desire to become federal judges one day. McLaren was later approved by Walsh's panel.

"When I dealt with Kleindeinst, I put my cards on the table," Walsh recalls. "I told him I recognized the likelihood of the government winning the case, but said that that was not in the public interest." He spoke three times with Kleindeinst on the phone and then sent him a "Dear Dick" letter, in which he argued that the appeal to the high court should be delayed until an interagency panel could explore the ramifications of the suit.

Walsh apparently didn't know that ITT wasn't depending on him entirely. As Jack Anderson later discovered, ITT made a $400,000 donation to the Republican Party around the same time the administration allowed the company to settle the antitrust action on very favorable terms. (Nixon's pithy advice to Kleindeinst on the Watergate tapes: "The ITT thing—stay the hell out of it. Is that clear?")



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Walsh's involvement with the Richardson-Merrell corporation, a pharmaceutical company, is more typical of his career as a corporate lawyer. Walsh became the company's outside counsel in 1961 and in 1964 he was appointed to its board of directors. He has made millions defending the company in drug litigation. In 1964, for example, he arranged a plea bargain in which three top executives of the company admitted that laboratory reports supplied to the government concerning Mer-29, an anti-cholesterol drug they developed, were falsified. Side effects of the drug included cataracts, vomiting, and hair loss. The company has paid nearly $200 million in damages.

Richardson-Merrell was also the U.S. licensee of thalidomide, a sedative for pregnant women that the FDA rejected after finding it caused birth defects (but that was widely marketed, with disastrous results, in Europe). Before the FDA ruled, Merrell gave out millions of samples to physicians in America. The drug was actively sold in Canada.

Then there's Bendectin, a drug for morning sickness. Bendectin was put on the market in 1956 and is currently the subject of nearly 2,000 damage claims in the United States and several hundred overseas. Jerry Skinner, who is representing nearly 800 families in a consolidated case against the firm in Cincinnati, says that the scientific evidence on the drug is equivocal. "A good deal says it does [cause birth defects], a great deal says it does not. But with the amount of evidence that says it does, the drug shouldn't have been marketed, especially to such a sensitive clientele [pregnant women]."

One such suit illustrates the Walsh litigation style. "Getting the facts" is not the half of it. The suit was filed in May 1980 by the parents of Anne Koller, born without arms and legs. More than seven years later, the case has yet to be decided on the merits. "The only people who were upset with my handling of the Koller case were my adversaries," Walsh says, breaking into a smile before adding mischievously, "That's OK with me."

The week before Christmas 1982, a secretary at the firm representing the plaintiff phoned Walsh's office and claimed Mrs. Koller had told her in private that she didn't take Bendectin during the crucial first trimester of pregnancy. Davis, Polk sent a private investigator to the secretary's apartment to induce her to sign a statement. The investigator promised to take care of her "wants and needs," including relocation expenses, medical expenses for her baby, legal help for a friend with immigration problems, and $15,000 in cash if she would sign. Walsh also hired an "independent" lawyer for the secretary, who ultimately cost $100,000. But then the secretary, who had a history of mental instability, had second thoughts. She called a paralegal at her firm to say that Walsh's firm was harassing her. (She didn't say that this was at her own instigation.) She later signed a statement saying that Mrs. Koller had never spoken with her about her use of the drug, but that representatives of Davis, Polk were pressuring her to say that she had.

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Walsh then filed a motion calling for Mrs. Koller's lawyer to be disqualified. Why? Because when he obtained the statement, he "thwart[ed] a true investigation of a crucial witness in pursuit of protecting the interests of his client." Of course, men from his team had done the same thing—and added the inducement of a bribe. Yet the trial judge (who had been approved by Walsh's panel) sustained the motion. In a stinging decision written by Chief Judge Patricia M. Wald, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals overruled the trial judge and raised questions of its own about the behavior of Walsh's team. "The extensive and detailed nature of the court's inquiry into possible improprieties of plaintiffs' counsel is especially confounding in light of the court's refusal to entertain any substantial inquiry into possible improprieties by defense counsel," the court wrote. "There was evidence, some undisputed, that defense counsel had engaged in discussions about a case with a confidential secretary for opposing counsel without her employer's knowledge, had . . . on its own obtained 'independent counsel' for [the secretary], and was paying substantial sums of money to provide [her] not only with counsel, but also with a comfortable apartment and other financial needs for her and her child." (The Supreme Court later ruled that the appeals court lacked jurisdiction to review the disqualification, though Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote that the Court "share[d] the Court of Appeals' concern about 'tactical use of disqualification motions' to harass opposing counsel.") Walsh was eventually removed from the case, reportedly for running up too large a bill.

That's how Walsh operates. "He's stubborn," says an old ABA colleague. "He gets onto something and stays on it like a bulldog." He didn't take his current job, he says, out of any indignation at a possible betrayal of the public trust by high government officials. Rather, he accepted the post because "I was asked to by a court I respect. It's an honor and professionally demanding." His next challenge will be to convince a jury that the targets of his investigation deserve to go to jail. If he doesn't, it won't be for lack of trying.

STEVEN LICHTMAN

Gorbachev's latest gambit.

THE INF TRAP

IN FEBRUARY Mikhail Gorbachev announced he was ready to accept a version of the zero-zero arms control plan for intermediate nuclear forces (INF) that President Reagan has been urging since 1981. Since then, experts in the nuclear mystery around the world have been repeating the question supposedly asked in every foreign ministry of Europe when Talleyrand died: "What does the old fox mean by *that*?"

On its face, Gorbachev's INF position is a trap. With two important amendments it could become a modest but worthwhile step toward a more stable nuclear regime—but only if Gorbachev is willing to move beyond arms control into the real world of the balance of power.

It is obvious, as Soviet negotiator Viktor Karpov has said publicly, that the ultimate Soviet goal is to denuclearize Western Europe, and thus (he doesn't add) to make its defense impossible. What makes Gorbachev's strategy plausible is the size and diversity of the Soviet nuclear arsenal and the pace at which it is being enlarged in all categories. The Soviet Union could now abolish its entire intermediate-range missile force without diminishing its capacity to hold Western Europe, Japan, and China hostage while keeping the United States at bay.

The Soviet Union now has not only an overwhelming advantage in longer-range INF weapons, but a near-monopoly of shorter-range INF weapons as well—that is, weapons with a range of 300-600 miles. Those weapons can reach targets in Western Europe, China, Japan, and the Middle East. So can Soviet intercontinental missiles. In ground-based intercontinental missiles alone, the Soviet Union has an advantage of at least 3-to-1 in deployed warheads, a larger advantage in throw-weight, and a large and growing if unverifiable stock of such weapons in warehouses and reload stations.

From this perspective, Gorbachev's conversion to the INF zero-option for Europe becomes all too intelligible. Even though the Soviets now seem to have agreed to include shorter-range INF weapons in the package, they can still hope to separate the United States from its allies and other interests in Europe and Asia by sacrificing the INF while stalling on agreements about intercontinental weapons and defensive systems. In the face of the growing Soviet advantage in intercontinental weapons and its monopoly in anti-satellite weapons and other defensive systems, this would further reduce the credibility of the American nuclear guarantee for Western Europe, China, Japan, and the Middle East. Such a move would be suicidal for the United States, but no one who contemplates what the United States did between the wars can say such a policy is inconceivable.

IN 1981 the zero-zero position was deemed to be marginally attractive from the Western point of view, despite decoupling implications, because it would have altered the overall nuclear equation in our favor. The Soviet Union would have destroyed about 1,000 deployed nuclear warheads plus their reloads in exchange for an American agreement not to deploy comparable weapons in Europe or the Far East. This, it was thought, would enhance the overall credibility of the American nuclear guarantee.

But several important changes in the nuclear balance have taken place since then. In 1983 the Soviet Union had a deployed force of about 1,000 SS-20 warheads with at least an additional 1,000 warheads as reloads. In 1987 the deployed Soviet SS-20 force includes over 1,300 warheads and at least an equal number of reloads. In addition, the

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Soviet Union now has 300 warheads on deployed SS-21s, 130 on SS-22s, and 240 on SS-23s, the three new mobile shorter-range INF systems. The United States now has 108 INF warheads on Pershing IIs and some 230 ground-based cruise missiles deployed in Europe.

Although the Soviet-American balance in deployed intercontinental weapons has changed only slightly, the number of Soviet intercontinental weapons in storage; the rapid increase in the Soviet deployment of shorter-range land-based missiles; and continued Soviet progress in anti-ballistic missile defenses, anti-satellite weapons, and other military activities in outer space have profoundly altered the context of the Soviet-American nuclear arms negotiations.

Arms control agreements cannot increase nuclear stability unless they regulate both offensive and defensive systems. If stability rather than uncertainty is still considered a desirable policy goal, there should be no separate INF agreement. An agreement that eliminates INF (and shorter-range) systems without stabilizing changes in the nuclear balance as a whole would leave Western Europe, Japan, and other American allies facing the specter of overwhelming Soviet nuclear and conventional capabilities at a time of increasing doubt about the American nuclear guarantee.

The INF component of an overall nuclear settlement should include all INF weapons except battlefield systems, and should provide low equal quotas for both the European and the Far Eastern areas. Low equal quotas are better than the zero option from every point of view. The risks of decoupling, especially for Germany, have become too great to permit a zero solution. And there is no justification for treating Europe and the Far East differently. Gorbachev has now announced that he would give up the Far Eastern differential in a zero-zero INF agreement.

THREE ARGUMENTS have been advanced in support of the zero-zero INF plan: (1) it would not be cricket to modify an American proposal just as the Soviet Union is preparing to accept it; (2) it is a deal we cannot resist, because it would require the Soviet Union to destroy more weapons than the United States; and (3) it would be easier to verify Soviet compliance with a zero-zero plan than with one calling for small equal quotas.

But nuclear arms negotiations are not a game of cricket, and the situation has changed since 1981. What is promising about Gorbachev's present position is that he seems to have accepted the principle of unequal reductions to equal levels. That principle would also be established, however, by an agreement for low equal quotas on each side. And it would not necessarily be easier to verify a zero-zero agreement: our satellites cannot photograph weapons located in warehouses or factories, and have had trouble locating SS-20s deployed in the forests of Siberia. Moreover, SS-20s are intercontinental SS-16s minus one stage. Thus even minor concealments could be devastating in a zero-zero regime, but far less serious if both sides had small quotas.

The ideal Western response to Gorbachev's offer should be: "We are pleased that you have finally decided to accept the basic INF approach we put forward in 1981. We wish to return the compliment, and therefore agree to the position you took at Reykjavik—that there should be no agreement until we have dealt with all parts of the nuclear equation." This was the position we took in the 1972 negotiations. It was sound then, and it is sound now.

Two strong currents of opinion within the Reagan administration and in Congress oppose such an approach. One group is eager above all for the television spectacle of Reagan and Gorbachev signing an INF agreement at an American summit meeting as a remedy for the president's political ailments and as the best possible preparation for a Republican victory in 1988. The second camp is a strange coalition whose influence is growing both in Europe and in the United States. Its members live by the slogan "Stop the world, I want to get off." The American members favor arms control agreements that would force the abrogation of American security commitments both in Europe and in Asia. They are genuine isolationists, and favor the zero option precisely because they hope it would help to decouple the United States from its network of security commitments, which they find tiresome and dangerous. And they regard SDI with almost religious zeal not as a practical necessity—which it is—but as a panacea that would liberate the United States from the burdens of having a foreign policy altogether.

EVEN THE BEST conceivable arms control agreement would be worse than useless if it were treated as a license for Soviet expansion through conventional forces, guerrillas, and terrorists. If Gorbachev is serious, the Soviet Union must finally confront the issue it has sidestepped for more than 40 years: the fact that the source of tension between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world is not the "arms race" or the nuclear weapon or mutual misunderstanding or the alleged clumsiness of American diplomacy, but the Soviet policy of indefinite expansion based on the aggressive use of force. A perfect arms control agreement could not end the cold war; it could not even eliminate the risk of nuclear war, since the most likely cause of nuclear war is escalation from conventional war. The cold war can end only when Soviet foreign policy undergoes a sea change, or the West adopts more effective programs of containment and active defense.

If Gorbachev wishes to convince the West that he really wants peace, the way to start is not to sign another piece of paper like the long line of empty agreements since Yalta, but actually to carry out the promises Stalin made at Yalta. If Gorbachev wants to change the political atmosphere and reduce tensions, the liberation of Eastern Europe is the place to begin.

EUGENE V. ROSTOW

Eugene V. Rostow was director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency during the first two years of the Reagan administration.

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Why the U.S. should bail out of the U.N.

LET IT SINK

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

OVER THE LAST 15 years, Americans and their Congress have become increasingly disaffected with the United Nations. Anti-Western and anti-American actions in the U.N. system led the United States to withdraw from one U.N.-specialized agency (UNESCO) and to begin withholding contributions for other U.N. activities (such as programs supporting the PLO and SWAPO, programs implementing the Law of the Sea Treaty, and the Department of Public Information, a fountain of anti-Western and anti-American propaganda). But the action that most threatened the U.N., because it mandated the withholding of large sums, was the 1985 Kassebaum-Solomon amendment aimed at, as we say in the United States, waste and abuse in the U.N. budget. When, in the midst of the Ethiopian famine, the General Assembly voted $73.5 million for a conference center in Addis Ababa, Congress decided it had had enough. It passed the Kassebaum amendment, cutting the U.S. contribution by a fifth.

By the fall of 1986, these American actions, together with the U.N.'s own wastefulness, had brought the organization to the brink of financial disaster. It had long had a paper deficit; now its contingency funds were exhausted as well. There was doubt that it could meet its payroll. When the 41st General Assembly opened in September 1986, the fate of the U.N. hung on the United States. Because of congressional restrictions, the United States had been withholding its $206 million assessment. Without at least half of that money, it was unlikely that the U.N. could survive the year.

The U.N. got the money and more. On November 21, before the first skipped payroll, the Reagan administration delivered a check for $100 million. An administration that began by complaining about the U.N. and encouraging congressional restrictions on U.S. contributions now reversed course. By March 1987 it was lobbying to change the Kassebaum amendment. Alan Keyes, assistant secretary of state for international organizations, went to Capitol Hill to argue that the U.N. had reformed and that the United States should pay its full assessment as a way of "buying an institutional, structural change." Senator Daniel Moynihan, once famous as a U.N. critic, praised the administration for its "deathbed conversion" to the idea of "international order." And Senator Nancy Kassebaum is now prepared to release the withheld funds.

The tide is turned. The most conservative American administration and others most skeptical of the U.N. are changing course just when the U.N. is most vulnerable. The U.S. is in the process of saving the U.N. Why?

The U.N. and its associated agencies spend about $4.5 billion per year. The United States pays 25 percent of that, more than twice what the Soviet Union pays and the equivalent of what the entire Third World pays. In total, the 15 major industrial states contribute about 80 percent of the assessed U.N. budget. Yet 80 small countries that together contribute less than one percent constitute a majority of the General Assembly, which in turn controls the budget.

Under the current one-nation, one-vote system, the United States has one vote out of 159 in the General Assembly, or a power equal to that of Benin. The purpose of the Kassebaum amendment was to give the United States weight on budgetary matters commensurate with its 25 percent contribution. The U.N. had a totally chaotic budget process that allowed the General Assembly to pass any budget and then add on whatever it wanted at its whim. And since the General Assembly is controlled by a bloc of countries that contribute very little to the budget, there is no incentive for discipline.

Six months after passage of the Kassebaum amendment, the secretary general appointed a group of 18 experts, including representatives of most of the major donor countries, to review U.N. budget procedures. The group recommended that the U.N.'s 21-member budget-making committee be strengthened and the major donors be given a greater voice. On December 19 the General Assembly unanimously approved the recommendation. The next day the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Vernon Walters, declared victory. The White House then issued a statement hailing the reform as "historic."

What was the nature of the historic breakthrough? Henceforth the budget committee would make its decisions by consensus, meaning that each of the big contributors, including the United States, would have veto power. But consensus decisions are a far cry from the weighted voting Kassebaum originally demanded. Also, the 21 members are chosen by the General Assembly. There is no automatic membership. Most important, there is a large loophole: if the budget committee cannot reach consensus, the General Assembly, with its automatic majority of non-donors, decides. Yet, in return for this "victory," the administration pledged to remove its hand from the throat of the U.N.

Elliot Richardson, chairman of the United Nations Association of the U.S.A., argues that withholding our U.N. dues violates international law (Article 17 of the U.N. Charter). The proper way to get the American assessment changed is to ask the General Assembly for permission to do so. It follows that the meager concessions now wrung out of the U.N. are ill-gotten.

Against voices like this, the administration has posed as

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tough guy, demanding concessions under threat. But the concession it did win is very soft. More important, the concession misses the point. The U.N. problem is not an accounting problem, though it is an American propensity to see life's failures that way. The problem is political. The real issue with the U.N. is not its excessive budget, but its core budget. What is the U.N. doing when it is *not* wasting money? And is that in accord either with the U.N.'s own declared purpose or with American interests?

OVER 40 YEARS, thinking about the purposes and justifications of the U.N. has evolved. As originally envisioned by its Western inventors, the U.N. was going to be the anchor of a new order of international law. Mohamed Sahnoun, former Algerian ambassador to the U.N., recently restated this familiar proposition: "Before the inception of the United Nations, the only form of real authority was the actual power of the strongest states. The world institution was founded to replace this state of affairs." The failure of the U.N. to fulfill this role is so obvious that everyone now expects the U.N. to ignore wars, invasions, and acts of terror except in the most selective cases, and even then (e.g., when "deeply deploring" the American invasion of Grenada) with the intent not of bringing peace but of scoring points for one side or the other. But it is not just that the U.N. is powerless to enforce norms. Continued illusions about the U.N. have had the unintended, but nonetheless real, effect of weakening these norms.

How? As Sahnoun indicated, in the past, international norms were enforced by great powers. Britain considered piracy to be a British navy problem. The great powers understood themselves to be the only enforcers, and acted accordingly: they accepted the responsibility. Occasionally the United States, today's pre-eminent power, does too. Its citizens (and others') are machine-gunned at Rome airport; the U.S. retaliates; machine gun attacks at international airports noticeably decrease. More often, the United States does not act that way. Compare the American action after Iran's seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran, a violation of one of the most ancient diplomatic norms. The United States went to the Security Council, the World Court, and the court of world public opinion. It got favorable rulings from all. The effect was zero.

Which course is more likely to deter future international lawlessness: appeal to paper institutions or self-enforcement? Americans, particularly after Vietnam, detest the role of enforcer. Institutions of international law create endless opportunities for avoiding that responsibility. Friendly shipping is blown up in the Persian Gulf. The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee moves to turn the problem over to the Security Council. Cyrus Vance and Elliot Richardson call for equipping vulnerable ships with the U.N. flag. That should stop Exocets. You do not have to support the administration's reflagging plan to recognize that handing the problem over to the U.N. is simply a way of tabling it. When a great power goes to paper institutions and demands that they enforce international norms, these norms, now lacking any enforcer, necessarily suffer.

The U.N. subverts international norms more actively as well, by morally undermining the few actions that help enforce them. The American self-enforcement action that took place over Tripoli was condemned by the U.N. General Assembly and declared a violation of international law by an almost 3-1 vote.

AT THE U.N.'s founding, there was a related, somewhat different, interpretation of its role: as the linchpin of a new state system that would transcend power politics. To read the declarations of those involved in shaping the U.N. is to be moved by their idealism and appalled by their naïveté. After returning from the 1943 Moscow Conference, Secretary of State Cordell Hull said that "there will no longer be need for spheres of influence, for alliances, for balance of power, or any other of the special arrangements by which, in the unhappy past, the nations strove to safeguard their security or to promote their interests." In 1946 Philip Noel-Baker, then minister of state, told the House of Commons that the British government was "determined to use the institutions of the United Nations to kill power politics, in order that by the methods of democracy, the will of the people shall prevail."

In practice there were two ways in which the U.N. could achieve this role of supplanting the realpolitik of the past. It could become a supersovereign organization, transcending and gradually diminishing the sovereignty of existing nations and thus evolving into a world government (whose embodiment, a kind of parliament-of-man, would be the General Assembly). The Baruch plan, under which all nations would place nuclear weapons in the hands of the U.N., was inspired by this vision and would, had it lived, have been a first step toward its realization.

There was also a less utopian version of the U.N. as supplanter of power politics. It postulated the U.N. not as an independent supergovernment but as an executive committee of the world's most powerful governments, the victorious powers of World War II. The committee was to be called the Security Council. Its permanent members, each endowed with a veto, would police the world in condominium. Such a condominium might work in a world not riven by intense geopolitical and ideological conflict. Unfortunately, we do not live in such a world. By the late '40s it became clear that Soviet-American conflict would paralyze the U.N. The Security Council, as a mechanism for keeping the peace, can only work if the great powers work in concert. The fact that the two greatest powers were now enemies made that impossible.

Virtually no one thought that the U.N. could mediate conflicts between the great powers. But it became clear that great power rivalry prevented it from regulating even regional conflicts. The only time that the U.N. could act was in the rare case where the interests of the United States and the Soviet Union coincided. They could agree, for example, on peacekeeping troops to police the Israel-Syria disengagement agreements. They could not agree on peacekeeping troops to police the Camp David Accords,

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that being a peace of which the Soviets disapprove.

Yet Camp David shows how utterly dispensable the U.N. is in its last remaining "peacekeeping" role. Peacekeeping troops can only remain in place at the sufferance of both belligerents. In May 1967, when Nasser ordered the expulsion of U.N. peacekeepers from Sinai, Secretary General U Thant immediately acquiesced. Belligerents that want to make war can get rid of the U.N. And belligerents that want to make peace do not need it. They can agree on any peacekeeping force they want. Indian troops police northern Sri Lanka, Syrian troops police Beirut, and a force put together by the United States polices Sinai. Lebanon shows that you can have blue helmets without peace. Sinai shows that you can have peace without blue helmets.

WHAT, THEN, is left of the U.N.'s international role? The old justification having evaporated, a new justification is advanced: membership in the U.N. has become for many developing countries an important badge of sovereignty. It allows them to participate in international politics. The problem with this condescending view of the U.N. as a playpen created by the adult powers for the children is that the sovereignty it creates is highly artificial and artificiality has its price. The price is a needless exacerbation of existing conflicts. By joining in the great game at the U.N., small countries that at best would have only regional foreign policies are required to have global foreign policies. They must develop a position on the Persian Gulf, Central America, and parking slots for satellites in geosynchronous orbit. The very structure of the U.N. and the pressure of bloc politics draws countries that would otherwise be uninvolved into very divisive disputes. Because votes are totted up on the big board at the General Assembly and because the world pays attention to such votes, the views of Colombia on Kampuchea become crucial. Colombia must acquire an opinion and then can bargain it away to the highest bloc bidder. The result is needless conflict and corruption.

The U.N. adds to international conflict in another way: by giving legitimacy, propaganda support, and official diplomatic recognition to selective "national liberation" movements—the PLO and SWAPO being its favorites. By adopting the logic of national liberation, the U.N. undermines its one guiding principle of universal respect for sovereignty. It also helps to enshrine and perpetuate selected grievances by ensuring that they do not fade from world attention, a risk that has long been an incentive for compromise. The U.N. rejects not only the first Arab-Israeli peace treaty, but any other compromise that does not satisfy the most extreme Palestinian irredentists. The U.N. role in the intractable Mideast conflict is thus modest but unmistakable: it is a warkeeping function.

If the U.N. does not keep peace, what then does it do? It provides three services.

1. *Turkish steambath*. The phrase is Jeane Kirkpatrick's. The U.N. has become a place where weak Third World countries can ventilate their resentments in rhetorical and pseudo-diplomatic attacks on the West. Therapeutic recreation for the have-not countries is the most harmless of the new U.N. roles.

2. *Lobby*. The Third World not only controls the U.N. budget, it controls the agenda. The U.N. and its agencies have become the lobby for the New International Economic Order, the New World Information Order, and other new orders that would appropriate the resources and diminish the liberties of the industrial democracies.

The mischief is not just anti-Western. The U.N.'s have-not majority will try to unsettle settled practice wherever its gaze falls and whenever envy moves. You would think, for example, that the one place on earth that the U.N. might leave alone is Antarctica. There can be no complaint about exploited masses, Antarctica being inhabited by penguins. Nor is there a crisis to address or a conflict to mediate. Antarctica is one of the few regions on earth where interested parties have been able to work out amicable, mutually agreeable relations. It is controlled by the 18 countries that work there and that are party to the Antarctica Treaty. Yet in December 1985 the General Assembly adopted three resolutions aimed ultimately at turning Antarctica into what the U.N. likes to call "the common heritage of mankind." Under this doctrine—it has already been applied to manganese nodules and whatever other goodies are to be found on the ocean floor—Antarctica's riches would belong to everyone, most particularly those countries that have never set foot on Antarctica, have never invested an ounce of effort into its exploration or development, but have mastered the machinery of the U.N.

This is the U.N., as lobby, in action. It has turned into a Western-subsidized, media-attended, non-aligned conference—except that it carries the authority not of resentful ex-colonies but of international law and world public opinion. Which brings us to the U.N.'s last, and most insidious, remaining function:

3. *Moral agent*. By controlling the flow and content of resolutions, the permanent Third World majority at the U.N. acts as articulator of what comes to be called world public opinion. It sets the tone of international moral discourse. This is not a trivial influence.

As it happens, the authority it draws upon is fraudulent. If the U.S. Senate consisted of self-appointed warlords, it could hardly claim to speak for the American people. The overwhelming majority of U.N. delegates represent dictatorships that have never had the remotest test of public opinion. But that fact does not prevent the General Assembly from claiming to speak for the "world community" and much of the world from accepting that claim.

And what the U.N. says serves to undermine the legitimacy of Western ideas, institutions, and interests. First, by means of selective moral attacks on the democracies. The most notorious of these, the biggest of the lies, is the 1975 resolution declaring Zionism (unique among the 159 nationalisms represented at the U.N.) to be racism. This formulation, part of a relentless (and expensive) U.N. campaign to delegitimize Israel, has now, thanks to the U.N., so entered the mainstream of international discourse that even in the United States it is frequently the subject of "debate." But as Moynihan has pointed out, Israel is the

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subtheme. The major theme is the attack on the West and its institutions, from the multinationals to the wire services, as neocolonialist exploiter and first cause of the miseries of the world. Israel, the most vulnerable Western outpost, is simply the most convenient target.

The "world community" sits in committee on the East River allocating opprobrium. As Alan Keyes points out, a triple standard rules: "Western democracies, and in particular the United States, come in for frequent condemnation by name. The tyrannies of the East Bloc, though guilty of far more explicit crimes, are criticized only by implication, in mild, anonymous resolutions. The tyrannies of the developing world are almost never criticized, unless their relations with the United States make them exceptional targets." There is a "Special Rapporteur" on human rights in El Salvador, but none on Nicaragua. Chile is regularly condemned; Cuba is never mentioned. Israel's alleged crimes fill so many volumes that a student of U.N. documents alone would have to conclude that Israel is a Nazi state the size of Eurasia. No attempt has ever succeeded to appoint a Special Rapporteur to look into Ethiopia's forced resettlement program, which has killed hundreds of thousands.

A SECOND, more subtle form of moral damage done by the U.N. is the debasement of the language of Western liberalism. At its founding, the U.N. adopted the idiom of the West. But words like "democracy," "rights," and "freedom" proved inconvenient for the majority of anti-liberal states that soon came to control the U.N. Rather than abandon the language of the colonizers, however, they adapted it. The result is the twisted Orwellian dialect of UNese.

Start with the U.N. roll call, where voting order is alphabetical. Under the letter "D," between Czechoslovakia and Denmark, comes first the Cambodian government-in-exile dominated by the genocidal Khmer Rouge, which must be addressed as "Democratic Kampuchea." Next comes "Democratic Yemen," whose present government was installed after a gangland-style politburo shoot-out.

As for "rights," the U.N. is forever inventing new ones to satisfy the majority's wish for transferring wealth and power from Western to non-Western countries. The most recent General Assembly, for example, invented the "right to development." Many of these new "rights" are meant to hasten the arrival of some new "order" (the U.N. is deaf to the unfortunate historical echoes of the word) such as the New International Economic Order, which would do to the world economy what Tanzania, for example, has done to its own.

And under the New World Information Order, the word "freedom" becomes a synonym for censorship. The motto of this new order is "the free and balanced flow of information." Its manifesto, commissioned by the non-aligned movement in Havana in 1978, spells out what that means: "regulation of the right to information by preventing abusive uses of the right of access"; "a definition of appropriate criteria to govern truly objective news selection"; establishment of a tribunal empowered to punish violators who disseminate false and distorted information.

One can no longer be surprised by the looking-glass character of the U.N. Syria, found in a British court to have planned to blow up a civilian jumbo jet with 375 passengers aboard, proposed last December that the U.N. sponsor an international conference on terrorism. A how-to conference? And the International Civil Aviation Organization, whose job, says its charter, is "to ensure the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation," has given special observer status to the PLO, inventor of the political airline hijacking.

In the West, we dismiss the sounds emanating from the U.N. as insignificant. But the rest of the world does not. The U.N. produces a billion pages of paper a year. They may not be read here, but they are read in the rest of the world. The U.N.'s words reach deep into much of the developing world, where there are not many sources of information, and where the U.N. Department of Public Information, with its 65 centers, provides the "megaphone effect" for whatever calumny is being pronounced at headquarters. We pay for the megaphone and our enemies speak through it.

Well, say the apologists, if the U.N. is just a megaphone, it is a mere instrument. If it does not originate ideas, it cannot be held responsible for the way it is used by its members. It is true that the U.N. may not be the originator of all the ideas it publicizes. As Edward Shils and Daniel Moynihan have suggested, these ideas may have reached the U.N. by way of the London School of Economics and the Sorbonne (with stops in Karachi and Dakar). But like a university, the U.N. serves as a crucial locus for the refinement, amplification, dissemination, and, most important, legitimation of ideas. They exit U.N. headquarters as the authoritative pronouncements of the institution that speaks for the "world community."

Nor will it do to argue that the corrupt state of the U.N. is the result of a development not intrinsic to the institution itself, namely the makeup of its current majority. No one is saying that it is the U.N. building on the East River that is hostile to Western ideas. It is the U.N. membership. But given the map of the world, the composition and inclinations of the majority are, for the extended future, fixed. There is a Third World majority. There is a Soviet bloc. There is an Islamic bloc. The democracies are a small minority. There are not two U.N.s, the one imagined by the Charter and the one with which we happen to be afflicted today. There is only one, and the one that exists in this world has become a menace to the very language of Western liberalism.

VERNON WALTERS testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the administration goal is "to restore the United Nations, not to destroy it." Jeane Kirkpatrick argues that we should not use our financial leverage as "the straw that breaks the camel's back." Why not?

The standard response is that the U.N. is getting better. Supporters point to recent votes against terrorism, hijacking, and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. And the *New York Times* notes a "sensible special session on Africa's food crisis."

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This list shows how far expectations for the U.N. have sunk. After 13 years of resistance, the U.N. finally came out against terrorism—in the abstract. It will not condemn any particular act of terrorism. In fact, when condemning Western retaliatory actions such as the raid on Libya, the U.N. does not even mention the provocation. By contrast, the General Assembly resolution against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan does not mention the words "Soviet Union." As for that "sensible" special session on Africa's food crisis, this means, in translation, that the U.N. did not blame the West for Africa's troubles. Western generosity saves Africa from a famine brought on by weather, war, and forced collectivization. The U.N. studies the problem and does not blame the West. At the U.N. this counts as an achievement.

Is the U.N. getting better? Many of the offenses mentioned above are the work of the latest (41st) General Assembly, the one that the administration hailed for fundamental reform and that prompted a U-turn in U.S. policy. Its achievements include: condemnation of the U.S. raid against Libya (affirming the "right of Libya to receive appropriate compensation"); proclamation of the latest right, "the right to development" (the vote was 133-11); reaffirmation of the New World Information Order (and of "the ongoing efforts of UNESCO" to promote it); and condemnation of Israel as a "non-peace-loving member state." (This last, coming from the likes of Iran and Vietnam, is more than just another chilling Orwellianism. "Non-peace-loving" has a very specific meaning at the U.N. The charter declares that membership is open to all peace-loving states. To call a country non-peace-loving is formally to declare it a pariah and to legitimize its expulsion.)

IT IS fashionable to argue, as Paul Kennedy does in the August 1987 *Atlantic*, that the root of America's foreign policy ills is the imbalance between American commitments and American resources. The American empire is overextended. This diagnosis is often followed with a prescription to cut commitments to allies. Perhaps it will come to that. But we could start more modestly. One rarely hears the "overextension" school suggesting that the pruning begin with the multilateral commitments that were made at the height of postwar American dominance that are now not merely wasteful but injurious to American interests.

The issue is not improving U.N. efficiency. Do we really want an organization more efficient in undermining Western values, devaluing the language of Western liberalism, attacking Western allies, condemning Western social and economic practices, and exacerbating the few conflicts to which it does turn its attention? The United States should instead make the very deliberate decision that the U.N. serves neither its own original purposes nor ours. We should leave and devote the money instead to worthy, non-politicized U.N.-affiliated organizations (such as the World Health Organization) and to bilateral aid, which the United States, not a bloc of hostile countries, will control. The absolute sum involved is not enormous. A few hundred million will not dent the budget deficit much, but it is a significant fraction of the U.S. foreign aid budget. And redirected to small, poor, and vital American allies—in the Caribbean, for example—it will do far more good, for them and for us, than does the U.N.

What of the good works of the U.N.? What, for example, of WHO? The answer is that it existed long before the U.N., and it will exist long after. There is no reason the United States cannot support independent agencies that pass the test of both fiscal responsibility and ideological neutrality. Originally non-political entities such as WHO might even benefit from a delinking from the U.N., which in recent years has helped politicize and thus devalue the work of many of these specialized agencies. Conferences on telecommunications, water resources, postal cooperation, or population will be more productive if they do not have to deal with the U.N.'s permanent agenda of neocolonialism, disarmament, apartheid, and Palestinian rights.

BUT WHY NOT stay and fight? Why not be, as Moynihan argued in his famous *Commentary* article (March 1975), the United States in opposition? Three reasons.

1. *It is corrupting*. The vocation of opposition can be edifying when there is some prospect of a minority becoming a majority. When there is not, it becomes demoralizing. When one's opposition becomes permanent, the inevitable tendency is to accommodate to the majority. The role of oppositionist becomes one of damage limitation, and that means compromise. Slightly less abusive language in resolutions comes to count as victory. It is human nature not to want to lose every vote. This is not abstract psychological theory. It describes the history of the Western reaction to its new minority status. Keyes, an opponent of withdrawal, writes that the democracies "have routinely engaged in a strategy of self-censorship and pre-emptive concession that leaves not only the results but even the proposed agenda for discussion entirely to majority whim." During the 1986 session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, for example, several *democracies* refused to support a "Special Rapporteur" to investigate Ethiopia's forced resettlement program.

2. *It is wasteful*. Even if we develop immunity to cooptation and corruption, what is the point of the exercise? If the purpose of foreign policy is to advance our ideals and interests in the world, are we more likely to achieve them with or without the U.N.? The tough-guy strategy for staying in the U.N. is to play the U.N. game of bloc voting by building our own bloc. That means dealing for votes. If they vote against us, they should fear retaliation, say, in trade or aid. If they support us, we repay their wisdom and good sense in similar coin.

This sounds hardheaded. But it reverses the logical priority of bilateral vs. multilateral relations. It is a poor investment of resources to buy votes at the U.N. Bilateral aid and trade ought to be used for objectives far more concrete and important to American national interest than a correct entry on the U.N. vote board—particularly since from our other pocket we are paying for the vote board. We can find far better bilateral uses for the money now spent both to buy the votes and run the board.

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3. *It is self-defeating*. The United States does more than sustain the U.N. financially. Our continued presence in the U.N. gives it legitimacy. Otherwise the U.N.'s pronouncements would have the weight of a Warsaw Pact or nonaligned declaration. Without the United States, the U.N., if it survived, would become even more strident and anti-Western. But it would be irrelevant. Take away the United States, and the U.N. collapses completely or retreats to Harare. Our oppositionist presence allows us the morally satisfying exercise of going on record against many U.N. outrages. But our presence then lends the outrages a legitimacy and credibility they would otherwise lack. Were the United States to lead the West out of the U.N. (as it led Britain and Singapore out of UNESCO), the rump U.N. would be as delegitimized as the Moscow Olympics. As it stands, the United States in opposition is a policy that defeats itself: it seeks to diminish the moral and political victories of its adversaries, but instead—inadvertently but necessarily—it blesses them.

U.N. critics have concentrated on far too narrow and peripheral issues. The administration has made its central complaint against the U.N. one of finances. (Others have focused on the U.N. as a Soviet spy nest. True, but spies have always been with us, and if that is the real problem, then the solution is for the U.N. to move its headquarters to some exotic capital and for the United States to follow.) But to focus on this complaint is to miss the major point: the U.N. has failed in its principal role, which is keeping the peace. In fact, it has degenerated to the point where its actions exacerbate the few conflicts it still influences and where its remaining moral authority is used to promote ideas and policies inimical to those of the Western democracies.

The United States stays in the U.N. for a variety of bad reasons: sentimental attachment to the hopes of 40 years ago, guilt over the fate of the League of Nations, inertia. One can respect the one-world idealism that attended the founding of the U.N. and still face the facts of today. The U.N. is more than just a failed instrument. It is a bad instrument. We have the power to see it shelved. We should use that power.

How to save the economy and win elections anyway.

SELLING HIGHER TAXES

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

THE DEMOCRATS need to remember why they are the party of taxing and spending. Democrats have been the majority party whenever they succeeded in building bonds with ordinary voters, usually based on a kind of rough economic populism. Philosophically, Democrats are not quite sure what they are; yet practically, the one notion that reliably unites the party is the idea that government ought to be deployed to benefit common people. When the formula works, the voters reciprocate; but when government seems paralyzed and Adam Smith is the only available salvation, voters are more inclined to support Republicans.

At the level of stated ideology, Democrats begin at a slight disadvantage, because they are the party that more or less believes in government, in a society that is reflexively anti-statist. But they more than compensate for this liability when they manage to deliver concrete benefits. This is the partisan implication of the famous observation made two decades ago by the political scientists Lloyd Free and Hadley Cantril, who noted the seemingly anomalous public opinion finding that Americans are "philosophical conservatives, but operational liberals." In this respect, the American voter is the opposite of his French cousin, who is said to carry his heart on the left but his wallet on the right. Americans carry their libertarian hearts somewhere on the right, but appreciate the practical benefits of activist government, as long as nobody puts too fine a philosophical point on it. That is why implicitly socialistic programs such as Medicare, Social Security, and public education enjoy overwhelming support, despite widely professed voter skepticism of "big government." And this, of course, is the essence of the Democratic electoral strategy otherwise known as tax-and-spend. The original version of that line, incidentally, was uttered by Harry Hopkins in 1934, and it went: "Tax and tax, spend and spend, elect and elect."

For almost a decade, however, this link between activist government and Democratic electoral success has been severed, first by the budget crisis, then by a misreading of Ronald Reagan's popularity and Walter Mondale's defeat. It is widely held that Mondale's worst single mistake was his call for a tax increase, when in fact his tax proposal was only the most visible nail in a complex political coffin. Moreover, public opinion polls suggest that Reagan wins support for everything *but* his ideology, and that his extreme negative view of government actually costs him voter approval.

Because of these twin constraints, the fiscal straitjacket and the ideological misreading, any Democrat elected to Congress since about 1978 has been denied the experience

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of spending public funds to address public needs; rather, the exercise has been primarily a debate about what to cut. To the extent that Democrats indulge the thought of raising taxes at all, this is usually directed at fiscal responsibility, and not at delivering benefits to citizens. But that approach really does risk repeating Mondale's fatal mistake of offering the tax without the spend—and hence without the elect.

Despite the usual conservative claims, the current fiscal crunch is not due to inexorable growth of government, but to the Reagan program of cutting taxes and raising military spending; the fastest growing item in the budget is interest on the burgeoning national debt. The biggest ticket items such as Social Security have been stabilized. All told, annual federal social spending has declined to 11.3 percent of GNP, compared with 12.1 percent when Reagan took office, a cut of about $36 billion.

AS THE presidential year approaches, as the moment of Reagan's greatness flickers, and as Democrats begin to recover a measure of self-confidence, it is dawning on most of the presidential field that the deferred problems left by the departing Reagan administration will all require substantial public expenditure. Other than such fiscally neutral ventures as a more enlightened foreign policy, and perhaps some selective re-regulation, all the themes Democratic candidates have sounded have a price tag.

Welfare reform costs money. Public works cost money. Rebuilding the education system and upgrading the quality of the work force for the sake of competitiveness cost a lot of money. So do day care, low-interest mortgage loans for young families, and targeted research and development, to say nothing of national health insurance and a cure for AIDS. To put a very crude, back-of-the envelope estimate on the cost of all these needs, something like $40 billion gets you a base model. But conventionally, the most pressing domestic political objective is saving, not spending. The budget deficit is now projected at about $161 billion for fiscal year 1987, growing to $181 billion for 1988 and $198 billion for 1989.

So what on earth is a good Democrat to do? In the absence of new resources to spend on long-neglected problems, the Democrats have little prospect of restoring the crucial link between voter, party, and constructive government, which is their time-honored recipe for electoral success. A generation ago that link was nicely bonded by things like FHA starter homes, and Social Security, and G.I. college loans, and two decades of useful, visible public works, ranging from the interstate highway system to local junior colleges. But today, when a youngish voter wonders what government provides, he is more likely to think of the IRS. Without public strategies that address contemporary needs, there is little prospect of extending these necessary links to a generation too young to remember the New Deal, and for whom Social Security signals not safe retirement but annoying payroll taxes.

Democrats, one way or another, have to bite this bullet or they might as well join the Republican Party. Happily, there are a number of ways to free up fiscal resources, if we can broaden the usual premises of the discussion. To do that, it is necessary both to acknowledge that the purpose of the exercise is spending new money as well as reducing the deficit, and to look beyond the conventional sources of "revenue enhancement."

For example, the two-year debate about tax reform gave birth to a new concept—"revenue neutrality"—that can be usefully flipped on its side. In the tax reform process, any reduction in tax rates had to be paid for by closing a loophole. However, one can use the same logic to close loopholes in order to redirect tax expenditures. Consider the unlimited deduction for home mortgage interest. This has three seriously negative effects. It provides subsidies regressively (the bigger the house and the higher the tax bracket, the more valuable the tax break); it makes housing too lucrative an investment and hence bids up the cost of housing for young homebuyers; and it costs the Treasury $30.4 billion. Capping the mortgage interest deduction at, say, the cost of a median-priced house in the local housing market would give everybody tax-subsidized basic shelter, but luxury shelter would be an unsubsidized extra. That would save the Treasury $10 billion to $15 billion, which could be redirected to where it is needed—starter homes for first-time buyers. That would be good policy (and politics) for the tens of millions of voters in their 20s and 30s camped out in their parents' houses. Even parents might be prepared to give up a little tax subsidy to get their adult children out of their spare room.

What we have here is a new fiscal concept—the idea of retargeting the allocation of tax expenditures to more defensible uses within the same general policy purpose. Another example: payroll taxes, which finance Social Security, unemployment compensation, and Medicare, are the most regressive form of tax. Under current law, if you are fortunate enough to earn more than $43,800 a year, you pay no Social Security tax on the excess, and your rate of payroll tax begins dropping. At incomes of $43,800 or less, it is a flat 14.3 percent (half of which is ostensibly paid by your employer). But if you earn, say, $100,000, your effective payroll tax rate is just 6.2 percent. This system is also perverse in other respects. Its downward bias makes it more expensive for employers to take on new workers, since total payroll taxes increase labor costs by over 15 percent. Why not reverse the way the payroll tax bites: remove the cap at the top, and add some relief at the bottom? Suppose we subjected all income to a payroll tax, but exempted the first $4,000 of earnings. Not only would that transform the payroll tax from a regressive tax into a progressive one and cheapen the cost of adding new workers. It would also produce several billion dollars' worth of additional net revenue to use on payroll-related social costs, such as retraining and lifetime learning.

And this suggests a second new concept, which is really a new wrinkle on a very old idea, namely that specific sources of revenue should be tied to particular uses. We already do this to some extent. Public education is substan-

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tially financed by local property taxes; Social Security and Medicare are financed largely by payroll taxes; highways are paid for out of trust funds financed by taxes on fuel. This approach is currently out of fashion in modern public finance theory, for two reasons. First, it is said to be inflexible. In flush periods, more money comes in than the system needs; in slack periods, needs go unmet. Ideally, in theory, government should raise its revenues from the most appropriate general sources, and decide its spending priorities according to current needs, not constrained by artificial trust funds. Second, trust funds and single-purpose taxes are said to create insatiable constituencies—"iron triangles" of bureaucrats, providers, and consumers.

HOWEVER, this view leaves out the quite valid political purpose of protecting defensible programs from periodic right-wing wrecking crews. When partisan conservatives are at work destroying programs and severing that necessary link between public program, voter, and Democratic Party, a little iron is just what is indicated. Moreover, dedicated taxes have a genuinely civic virtue in that they show people just what they are getting for their money and connect the tax in a logical matter to the outlay. One of the reasons airports are such a mess is that President Reagan has refused to spend funds dedicated to airport maintenance and construction. The highway program has been relatively immune to Republican wrecking mainly because it is financed by a more ironclad trust fund. Social Security has escaped largely unscathed because people feel they have earned it with their payroll taxes. In this approach, there is admittedly a danger of excess—programs that outlive their usefulness—but at present the danger is the opposite one: genuine public needs (and Democratic Party purpose) are being starved.

Franklin Roosevelt may have been the last Democratic president who fully grasped this logic. The fiscal experts around FDR, who proposed the design for Social Security in 1935, thought he was being a bit silly when he insisted that the entire system be financed out of payroll taxes. They also questioned the device of trust funds as a bit disingenuous, since in practice tax revenues flowed in and benefits flowed out, as in any other public program. But Roosevelt, according to the memoirs of then-Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, presciently explained, "We put those payroll contributions there so as to give the contributors a legal, moral, and political right to collect their pensions and their unemployment benefits. With those taxes in there, no damned politician can ever scrap my social security program."

Modern public finance theory aside, Democrats may well find that they have to reinvent this approach of tying visible taxes to visible benefits, for good, sound political reasons. For example: payroll taxes for a modernized labor market, education, and training system; higher estate taxes on the wealthy to pay for college tuition of kids without rich grandfathers; some new progressive luxury consumption tax to finance necessary social overhead such as day care and health insurance; and maybe a tax on Smith's real estate windfall to pay for Jones's starter home. This, by the way, should be good populist electoral politics. When the voters are getting something for their taxes, Republicans can scream "Tax and spend!" all they want, and it rolls off.

Increasing social spending by $40 billion equals slightly less than one percent of GNP. It just about restores what Reagan has cut. Extending the social contract to new areas such as national health insurance and redirecting current outlays to reach a new generation of citizens does not portend an ever-expanding scheme of spiraling government programs. Longtime public responsibilities such as basic education and Social Security are now stabilized as fiscal claims on GNP. In some areas, such as hospital insurance, a unified national program would actually reduce total costs. Lately even the Swedes, with a Social Democratic government and a far more comprehensive welfare state, have managed to stabilize and pare back the fraction of national income spent on social expenditure.

Unfortunately, the current debate about appropriate fiscal policy has been narrowed by the obsession with the deficit. The unstated (and politically fatal) assumption is that every nickel of new taxes must go for deficit reduction. Even the menu of tax options recently published by Dan Rostenkowski's House Ways and Means Committee is far too timid politically. It does cost out dozens of possible tax increases, several of which make good political sense, including a capital gains tax on inherited stock ($5.3 billion next year), and a lower limit on the tax deductibility of home equity loans ($1.8 billion next year). But Rostenkowski directed the staff not to include such big-ticket and more populist items as a cap on home mortgage loans, or a tax on stock transfers, or a higher top bracket on the personal income tax.

These last two items are apparently casualties of petty infighting between Rostenkowski and his archrival, House Speaker Jim Wright. Last September Rostenkowski said that if taxes are raised, we should begin with a higher top rate on the personal income tax, which is scheduled to drop to 28 percent next year. But when Wright made that proposal his own, Rosty backed off. Holding the top rate at its current level of 38 ½ percent for people earning over $200,000 a year would avert up to $22 billion in revenue losses next year. Adding a stock transfer tax, which was once on the books in the United States and is still public policy in such booming economies as Japan and Germany (and even in supply-side Britain) would save another $10 billion. Instead, there is a good deal of momentum in Congress for a plague of small and highly regressive excise taxes.

The Democrats' willingness to broach a tax increase at all is a sign of stirring partisan life. But the assumption that taxes should go only for deficit reduction prolongs the lethal condition of fiscal Reaganism. By all means Democrats ought to take steps to reduce the deficit, but they should do it with populist taxes and military cuts. They should never raise taxes only to clean up Ronald Reagan's fiscal mess; they also need to spend. The sooner Democrats rediscover that logic, the sooner they can get on with the business of rebuilding the party and the country. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Merely Making Pictures

Some 20 years ago the Danish director Henning Carlsen made a film of Knut Hamsun's great autobiographical novel *Hunger*, an account of a young artist's struggle to *be*. Per Oscarsson's performance as the artist was superb, but the film itself was poky, insecure. Now Carlsen has made *Wolf at the Door*, another film about an artist—Paul Gauguin,

Wolf at the Door
(International)

Good Morning, Babylon
(Vestron)

during the Paris period between his first visit to Tahiti and his permanent return to the Pacific. Donald Sutherland's performance as Gauguin is not comparable to Oscarsson's in *Hunger*; still, Sutherland's acting is the best element in the new film. He does his thoughtful, talented best to avoid the clichés of the mad artist, to concentrate, as far as the role allows, on the convictions that determined Gauguin's behavior. He seems to realize that if one can't "act" genius, one can at least give to the observable behavior of a genius some plausible connection with what is buried in him.

Sutherland doesn't get enough help from the script. It was based, first of all, on the facts, then on a story by Carlsen and Jean-Claude Carrière, who used to work with Buñuel. The screenplay was written by Christopher Hampton, who did the screenplay of *The Good Father* and the adaptation of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* now on Broadway. (This Danish-French coproduction was filmed in English—not the oddest combination in film history.) Hampton's dialogue is well modeled and neat, but he is hopelessly burdened with inert material. All that really happens in the film is that Gauguin returns to Paris in 1893 with a lot of paintings, expecting a triumph that he doesn't get; then, after two years of further unsuccess, he has to sell three paintings by his late friend Van Gogh in order to finance his return to Tahiti, and departs. The interval is filled with footling stuff: the adoration of a teenage girl who lives in the same house; the arrival and departure of a Javanese model-mistress; his troubles with his Danish wife, who is the mother of most of his children; and further adventures with a young Parisienne who has had a child by him. Much activity, little action. The high point is the brawl with sailors in Brittany that injures him and affects his health.

A tangential strand is Gauguin's friendship with August Strindberg, based on their mutual respect for each other because of (rather than despite) Strindberg's undisguised dislike of Gauguin's painting. Strindberg, a minor role, is played by Max von Sydow, who is experienced in the character: he played Strindberg in *The Night of the Tribades* on Broadway in 1977. Von Sydow, too, tries to keep his performance out of the movie-genius category as he presents the careful sanity of a man with corrosions of madness.

Strindberg's notorious misogynistic views are clearly expressed, and the idea of male superiority is clearly expressed in the whole film. We are asked to sympathize with Gauguin's cavalier treatment of the young Parisienne and the Javanese woman and his Danish wife because he is a male with a destiny. It's the same set of attitudes that permeates Somerset Maugham's fictionalized account of Gauguin, *The Moon and Sixpence*. Obviously the then-current social ideas cannot be tampered with, but in order for this film to register today, the drama of the man's struggle, the depth of his torment, would have to be so strong as to be irresistible. (As, to take a Himalayan example, in Strindberg's *The Father*.) Under Carlsen's direction, which is more concerned with painterly composition than with vital filmmaking, the drama does not come.

Edward Pressman has produced some interesting films, including *Badlands* and *Plenty*. He is also capable of boners, and he has made a huge one with *Good Morning, Babylon*. According to the press kit, when he read the original story by Lloyd Fonvielle, Pressman thought immediately of Vittorio and Paolo Taviani to direct the film. There hasn't been a greater mismatch since Woody Allen did *Interiors*. *Good Morning, Babylon* is, or is meant to be, a comedy—romantic, but still a comedy. From beginning to end, the Taviani brothers handle the film with all the auction-room artiness, the facile portentousness, that have made most of their films hard to bear and make this one unbearable.

It's about Italians, which may have prompted the thought of the Tavianis, but most of it takes place in America. Locus doesn't make the difference: the few early sequences in Italy are somewhat more comfortable than the rest of the film but are still off pitch. Early in this century two young Italian brothers,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Jean de Florette. Enjoyably old-fashioned chronicle of Provençal farm life early in the century. Yves Montand excellent as shrewd peasant, Gérard Depardieu forceful as doomed newcomer to farming. (Reviewed 7/6/87)

Rita, Sue and Bob Too. Two teenage girls and a thirtyish married man cavort in the middle of contemporary English poverty. Fierce fun and energy, though story and setting don't quite relate to each other. (8/10&17/87)

The Whistle Blower. The tentacles of British secret services entangle civilians. Good atmosphere, quietly strong acting by Michael Caine. Script is flavorful, even if it comes a bit untied. (8/10&17/87)

Wish You Were Here. England again. A seaside town, 1951. A high-spirited English girl gets herself in various kinds of trouble but doesn't care. A pat ending, yet Emily Lloyd's breezy performance triumphs anyway. (8/3/87)

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both artisans, immigrate to this country and eventually wind up in Hollywood, where they work on the construction of the sets for D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*. Their great creations are the rearing elephants on top of the giant columns in the Belshazzar's Feast sequence. En route to California, and while there, they have plenteous adventures, including amours; then they get into the First World War, ending up in a scene that is supposed to be ironic-comic-profound, and supposes it as clumsily as everything in the film is supposed.

The Tavianis wrote the screenplay with Tonino Guerra, whose collaboration on the best Antonioni films assures him of whatever immortality is available to screenwriters. But Guerra has never been noted for his comedy or romance. The Tavianis, whose best works were the serious *Padre Padrone* and *Kaos* and whose bores include the equally serious *Night of the Shooting Stars*, *The Meadow*, and *Allonsanfan*, are no more bubbly than Guerra. They seize every opportunity to drag the pace and to create memorable stills. When the two emigrant brothers are working as swineherds in the middle of the American desert—*pigs* in the desert?—they meet a train full of Italians on the way to work in California; and as the sun's beams fall between the railroad cars with a radiance to bring joy to the hearts of every Woolworth art collector, the wandering duo and the other Italians join voices in a chorus set to a melody from Verdi's *Force of Destiny*.

Somewhere inside this unfocused, prettified bore, there's an idea: old European culture being wedded to new American culture, a true romance of historical metamorphosis. But *Good Morning, Babylon* behaves as if it had got the bends traveling from one culture to another. The only actor in the cast worth mention is Charles Dance, who was Meryl Streep's husband in *Plenty* and who here is D. W. Griffith; and he is worth mentioning only because of what the Tavianis have made of him. He plays the Kentucky-born Griffith with a molasses drawl, although Richard Schickel tells us in his meticulous biography that Griffith had "no more than a soft, attractive trace of a regional accent." And he makes Griffith generally a soppy cartoon figure who fits perfectly into a film that is more gummy than romantic, more ludicrous than comic.

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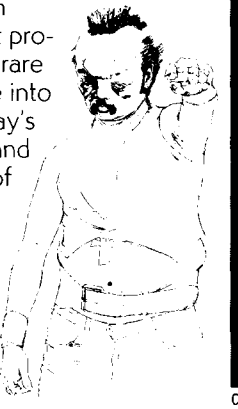

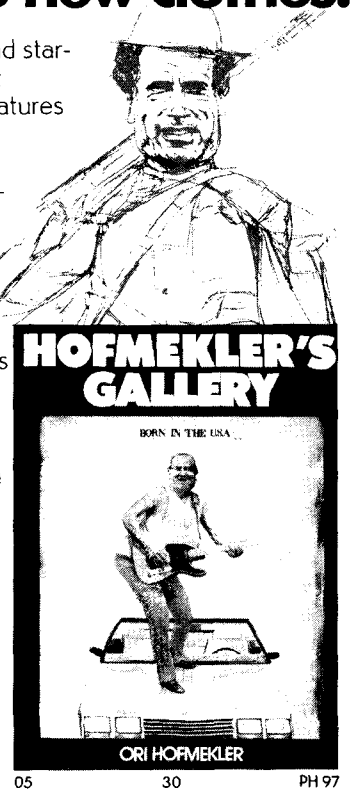

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FROM BOGS TO RICHES

The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age by Simon Schama

(Knopf, 698 pp., $39.95)

"The Batavian territory," wrote Lord Macaulay, "conquered from the waves and defended against them by human art, was in extent little superior to the principality of Wales." One of the great enigmas of European history is how the inhabitants of this minuscule area of waterlogged land succeeded in asserting their independence from the apparently overwhelming power of Spain, and in establishing themselves during the first half of the 17th century as a dominant force on the European scene.

They had, it seemed, broken all the rules. In a monarchical Europe they had apparently managed to create a viable state based on republican institutions. In a world that took it for granted that political survival depended on the preservation of religious uniformity, they showed that a plurality of religious faiths was not, after all, a recipe for disaster. Here was a society visibly prosperous in the midst of a Europe mired in recession; a society that, defying all the laws of political gravity, had managed in the course of two generations to become the center of a worldwide empire; a society that, without the alleged benefits of a princely court and a high aristocracy, was proving pre-eminent in the arts both of war and peace.

What was it about the Dutch that enabled them to achieve such spectacular successes? And who, indeed, were the Dutch? They were, as Simon Schama sets out to show us in his massive and scintillating book, an invented nation, a community that fashioned itself in the course of a prolonged and hard-fought struggle with man and the elements. The kind of community that they were, and that they became, is explored by Schama in a series of chapters that are, in effect, extended and highly suggestive essays around a central theme; and these illustrative essays are illustrated in turn by a vast array of plates drawn from the paintings and engravings of the Dutch Republic's Golden Age.

The adducing of national character as a major source of historical explanation has not found favor among 20th-century historians. The process was discredited by the antics of some of their 19th-century predecessors, all too prone to find in supposedly unchanging national characteristics excessively easy answers to complex historical questions. The modern tendency has been to look elsewhere, to almost everything *except* national character, for the cause of historical change. The success of the Dutch, for instance, has been generally ascribed to their affirmation of "bourgeois" values in an essentially aristocratic world, and to their Calvinist "ideology," itself seen as a repository of bourgeois ideals. This approach will probably seem as crude to future generations of historians as the nationalist approach of the 19th-century historians has appeared to those of our own times. It is one of Schama's major achievements that he has not been afraid to confront directly the problem of national character and to bring it back to the center of the historical stage.

But national character for Schama is not the immanent national character of the 19th-century historians. It belongs, instead, to the 20th-century world of the social anthropologists, who reconstruct a society's value systems and collective beliefs through its cultural manifestations. Schama's aim is to uncover for us the collective consciousness of the inhabitants of the Dutch Republic in the 17th century, but it is a collective consciousness that, far from being congealed or frozen in time, evolves and adapts itself in response to changing historical situations and challenges. In other words, he approaches his task as a historian, profoundly conscious of change over time, while seeking to identify those common elements in the Dutch mentality that made the 17th-century republic such a dynamic cultural and economic force. This is a challenging assignment, and, even if he cannot entirely carry it through, Schama approaches his task with high intelligence and a degree of panache that will sweep all but the most refractory readers along in his wake.

He is fortunate to have as his subject of study a society that created and left behind for future generations a vast array of evidence offering a multitude of clues to the way in which it thought about itself and about the world. In this respect, historians of the Netherlands are unusually lucky. There is the evidence, first of all, provided by the land itself, the lush tracts of pasture sheltering behind the dikes that allowed them to be reclaimed at such high cost from the sea. There is the architectural evidence: the splendid Amsterdam town hall, the luminous churches with their unadorned white interiors, the comfortable brick houses with their well-scrubbed doorsteps. There is the literary evidence. And above all, there is the visual evidence of an unsurpassed richness in the 17th-century world.

Schama draws heavily on the visual evidence, on familiar, and less familiar, genre scenes, on the Steens and de Hoochs, but also on a wide range of engravings, particularly from the copious moralizing works of Jacob Cats. On some of these pictures and engravings he has illuminating things to say. There is a nice analysis, for instance, of a solemn portrait by Jacob Cuyp of a little girl holding a very large pretzel. Schama carries us persuasively through the symbolism of pretzels in Dutch iconography, to reach the conclusion that her parents wanted to represent their daughter as a theater of the contending powers of good and evil.

The interpretation of 17th-century Dutch painting is currently the subject of vigorous debate. Schama's kind of pictorial analysis might at first sight seem to place its author squarely in the ranks of those for whom the painting carries a heavy symbolic freight. But he is not to be easily pinned down. As between the descriptive and prescriptive schools of interpretation, he takes a relaxed, indeed an agnostic, view. The very dichotomy for him is artificial and unnecessary. Netherlands society happily combined a long tradition of close observation with the moralizing concerns of Northern humanism; and he sees, to my mind convincingly, a calculated ambiguity in the intentions of many of his artists, leaving the beholders to extract what they wanted from the scenes of low life.

But Schama's book, for all its wealth of illustration, is not intended to be a study or a reinterpretation of Dutch painting in the Golden Age. His concern is with the society that produced the art.

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Essentially he is using the visual records as an additional source of documentary evidence about the character of the society under review. This is the conventional historical approach; but it is not always followed with the flair and discrimination displayed by Schama, who shows himself well aware of the pitfalls awaiting those who would see in the evidence of art a literal rendering of 17th-century Dutch "reality." A girl with a pretzel is a girl with a pretzel—but she is also, as Schama shows, something more.

Why she *is* something more is in essence the theme of Schama's book. *The Embarrassment of Riches* is a cleverly ambivalent title, which reflects the ambivalence of a society confronted with the phenomenon of its own success. The story begins with the wresting of effective independence from Philip II of Spain. The Dutch Republic that emerged from the struggle was essentially a new country; and as such it was faced with the immediate task of fashioning a new national identity in order to mobilize and maintain the loyalty of its citizens. In his first chapter, on "Moral Geography," which provides a good sample of Schama's distinctive (and occasionally bizarre) approach, we begin, somewhat unexpectedly, with the Amsterdam House of Correction, which allegedly contained a cell where prisoners could save themselves from drowning only by vigorous pumping. The theme of the chapter, in other words, is water. The prisoner in the drowning cell becomes a metaphor for a society that had learned over the centuries the need for constant vigilance and self-reliance in order to save itself from the encroaching ocean. The ocean in turn becomes a metaphor for Spanish absolutism; and we find the Dutch under William the Silent struggling simultaneously against the tyrant Spain and the tyrant sea.

Schama has a remarkable eye for the apt illustrative detail, and it is this that gives his book much of its freshness and immediacy. But it should be said that some readers may well find themselves almost literally engulfed. Detail is piled upon detail in baroque profusion, until the illustration itself threatens to become the central theme. This is a self-indulgent form of historical writing; and if Schama entertains and delights his readers with his ready wit and his throwaway aphorisms, he is equally liable to submerge them beneath a cascade of words, witticisms, and illustrative examples that may require of them heroic exertions if they are to save themselves, like the Dutch, from drowning.

JACOB CUYP, *PORTRAIT OF A CHILD* (PRIVATE COLLECTION)

Still, amid the turbulent swirl of the waters significant shapes can be detected, and major themes periodically emerge, rather like the great whale that beached itself in 1598 on the coast near Scheveningen—thus providing Schama with the opportunity for a splendid excursus, in the 17th-century manner, on the literal and symbolic importance of stranded whales. Having revealed the Dutch, in his first chapter, to be the inhabitants of a "Christianized diluvian culture," he uses his excellent second chapter to examine the nature of their patriotism. In particular, he shows them identifying themselves with the ancient Batavians, struggling heroically against imperial Rome, and also with the Children of Israel going up from captivity.

Such identifications, historical or biblical, were common currency in the Europe of the 16th and 17th centuries. The Exodus metaphor, as Michael Walzer has recently reminded us, exercised a powerful fascination, with Spaniards, English, and Dutch alike all seeing themselves as peoples chosen of the Lord. The doctrine of exceptionality, therefore, was by no means exceptional; and if the self-evaluation of the various European nationalities is taken at face value, the crossing of the Red Sea assumes something of the character of a multinational enterprise. This in turn raises the question of whether the distinctiveness of the Dutch, the elusive subject of Schama's research, was quite as remarkable, after all, as he would have us believe.

To judge from a passage in his introduction, Schama himself has some hesitations on this score. "In trying too hard to suggest the peculiarities of the Dutch world," he writes, "I probably exaggerate its distinctness." But he goes on to defend himself by arguing that "there was something special about the Dutch situation . . . that did set it apart from other states and nations in baroque Europe. That something was its precocity." The essence of his argument is that in a mere two generations the Dutch Republic became a world empire. The unparalleled prosperity it brought in its train could be regarded as setting upon the Dutch the seal of divine approval, but at the same time it represented a sinister challenge to

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the values and virtues that had made the Dutch what they were. Riches, in effect, were something more than an embarrassment. They were a dangerously corrupting influence, threatening the moral fiber of the young republic and drawing God's chosen people away from the straight and narrow path.

For the 17th-century Dutch, therefore, the enemy within presented an even greater danger than the enemy without. It is the resulting ambivalence in the face of their own success that is, for Schama, the key to 17th-century Dutch civilization. Greed and guilt went hand in hand. The Dutch, in consequence, were perennially engaged in the attempt to reconcile contrary impulses. This is a valuable insight, and Schama makes use of it to explain and interpret salient aspects of Dutch culture. The notorious Dutch obsession with cleanliness, for instance, becomes a moral reaffirmation of quintessential Dutch values against encroaching impurity. Similarly, the girl with the pretzel symbolizes the struggle between the competing forces of good and evil, of redemption and damnation. In doing so, she almost becomes the Dutch Republic in microcosm.

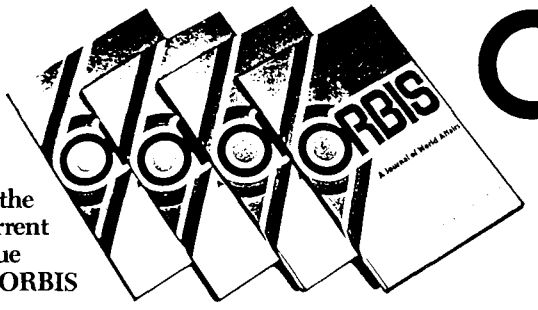
Schama's thesis about the ambiguities that lay at the heart of 17th-century Dutch civilization is attractive and plausible, but it does not seem to me to go very far in explaining that civilization's distinctiveness. The tension between greed and guilt has been a persistent theme in the history of Western societies, and it was not confined to the countries of the Protestant north. Take, for instance, the case of the archenemy, Spain. Here, too, was a society that, a hundred years before the Dutch, had risen in the space of two generations to become the center of a global empire. Like the Dutch, the Spaniards also saw the imprimatur of divine approval in their miraculous run of successes. But again like the Dutch, the riches of empire left them troubled and uneasy.

More insidious than any foreign enemy, the ease and sloth that came in the wake of gold and silver began perverting Spain's scale of values, and threatened the country with ruin. Ironically, even the Spanish response was similar, although it assumed a different manifestation. Spain, too, acquired an obsession with cleanliness, but not exactly in the manner of the Dutch. The vision of an army of Spanish housewives forever polishing, scrubbing, and sweeping does not exactly ring true. For Spaniards, cleanliness (*limpieza*) meant above all cleanliness of blood. The national obsession with cleanliness took the sinister form of an attempt to exclude from society all those contaminated by the taint of Jewish ancestry.

For the 17th-century Dutch, this kind of purification by exclusion was unthinkable. They had set out on the adventure of independence as a tolerant and pluralistic society; the adoption of racial or religious uniformity would have represented a denial of everything for which they had fought. If Schama is right in seeing the Dutch preoccupation with cleanliness as a moral imperative, as I believe he is, the very absence of other, more drastic options may have helped to channel it into the benign forms that he so vividly describes. There can surely be few more harmless ways of confronting the challenge of moral pollution than scrubbing a doorstep.

IT IS A testimony to the richness and the variety of Schama's exuberant book that his discussion so often raises in the mind of the reader questions that go beyond Dutch experience and touch on the nature of the historical process itself. But in the attempt to identify and explain the singularity of the Dutch, I think Schama might have helped both himself and his readers if he had been a bit more willing to glance at other societies. In particular, the neighboring territory of the southern Netherlands, which had remained loyal to Spain, would have offered a wonderful controlling device. Here was the Dutch Republic's twin society, but a twin that followed a diametrically different path to maturity. The southern Netherlands in the 17th century was everything the Dutch Republic was not. It was a dependent, and not a free, state; a Counter-Reformation, not a Calvinist, society; absolutist rather than libertarian; and culturally dominated by the Brussels court. One of these societies produced a Rembrandt, the other a Rubens. If ever the southern Netherlands find their Schama, we shall be in a better position to understand the singularity of the Dutch.

What Schama has done for us, however, and with extraordinary flair, is to recreate with enormous vividness some of the most striking characteristics of 17th-century Dutch civilization and life. In his final chapters, for instance, he has fascinating material on family life and children, and suggests that the Dutch provide



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the first sustained image of parental love in European art. His explanation for this is characteristically imaginative, although again it needs testing against the experience of other societies. While the ethos of other 17th-century states, he argues, was built around the aura of a dynasty or the historical privileges of a city commune, for the Dutch the family household was the focus and center of national life. The mind moves at once to Puritan New England, another society in which the authority of the state was weak.

For the Dutch Republic that Schama has evoked for us was not so much a state as an anti-state. Authority was devolved and fragmented. Many of the institutions of public life were absurdly archaic by the standards of 17th-century Europe. But somehow, in ways that Schama never quite manages to explain to us, the Dutch contrived to make these institutions work, and to work in a manner that made an apparently anachronistic community a pioneer of modernity. It was an extraordinary feat, and by the later 17th century the strains were beginning to tell. But what a miraculous achievement it had been! And indispensable to that achievement was the fashioning of a self-image that enabled the republic to hold its own against the encroaching flood tides of a hostile world. It is this self-image that Schama has recreated with great erudition and imaginative verve. At times the erudition threatens to overwhelm, but the final image remains that of the author himself, the exact reverse of Stevie Smith's poetic figure, not drowning but waving, as he hauls us breathless to the shore.

J. H. ELLIOTT

J. H. Elliott is professor of history at the Institute for Advanced Study. His most recent book is *The Count-Duke of Olivares* (Yale University Press).

HOMEBODIES

Domestic Affairs: Enduring the Pleasures of Motherhood and Family Life by Joyce Maynard

(Times Books, 313 pp., $17.95)

The Ballad of Sexual Dependency by Nan Goldin

(Aperture, 144 pp., 126 photographs, $39.95)

Joyce Maynard and Nan Goldin, both born in 1953, have recently produced books that can loosely be called diaries—one a collection of newspaper columns, the other a series of photographs. Both women come from middle-class white America, and the work of both details the nuances of domestic life.

The old debate on whether the management of home and hearth should be the special province of women has died down of late. While the first wave of feminists spat on the kitchen floor, so to speak, this generation is inclined to go all gooey over wee bonnets and bunches of dried marjoram. Even traditional free spirits—unmarried artists, rabble-rousers, and the like—seem unable fully to extricate themselves from the romantic thrall of domesticity. Thus, writer Maynard rhapsodizes over raspberry pies baking in the oven, and photographer Goldin snaps a motel bedroom where some friends are screwing. And both of them are homemakers.

As readers of the *New York Times* and other papers have long known, Maynard is the champion specimen of the girl-next-door who stays put. Although she did a stint at Yale (memorable chiefly because in the early '70s, while a freshman, she wrote a memoir of her precollege life for the *Times*) and later worked for a year or two as a newspaper reporter, Maynard eventually returned to her native states of New Hampshire and family, therein to marry and produce three children. She has strayed from the '50s fantasy only in having written about it—exhaustively, in the widely syndicated "Hers" column of the *Times*.

Domestic Affairs is a collection of Maynard's homely musings from the last nine years. The book's editors saw fit to stack the columns back to back, with little effort made to remove repetitions. Already no fan of her newsprint appearances, I found myself absolutely flattened by the force of Maynard in bulk: she's a tidal wave of Hershey's chocolate milk. In sweetly prim, self-righteous fashion, Maynard chronicles the downs and ups of the "modern" hausfrau—as she cooks with a cheerful will and cleans with somewhat less; chauffeurs children; quarrels with husband; and frets about it all in print. Mom Maynard directs the first-grade play:

> I told Jimmy's mother how good her son was in the play, she looked at me incredulously. "Jimmy?" she said, "*Jimmy*?"
>
> The thing about a play is that when he's onstage Jimmy doesn't have to be Jimmy. He gets a fresh start. He's Mr. Paperclip. And people will clap for him.

Every mishap, every moment of motherhood, occasions its own treacly moral.

> During our daughter's babyhood, when we were most broke, I harbored the fantasy (shared by half the mothers in America, I'll bet) that she might make diaper commercials. Where was there a cuter, more adorable baby? Who could resist her—or whatever brand of diaper she'd wear? If she would just do—in front of a camera—what she did for me in our living room (putting the diaper on her head, kissing the baby on the diaper box), she might earn herself a college education. But we lived in the country—no ad agencies, no talent scouts within a hundred-mile radius. So her antics in diapers went unrecorded by everyone but her father and me. And I'm sure it was all for the best.

This passage is paradigmatic. First, there's the characteristic baby-pride, tempered by the calculated acknowledgment that *all* mothers feel this way. Then there's the appropriate channeling of ambition: it was for a college education, not for reasons of showing off or earning a lot of money with which to have fun herself, that such a career was contemplated. Then there's the self-righteousness about how she was a hundred miles from a talent scout (read the sinful city)—so, sigh, it was all for the best.

But what would be so terrible about admitting that maybe she did want to show off with her baby? Or admitting that, as a journalist writing for the biggest newspaper in the country, she

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had all the requisite connections to pursue a career for her baby in commercials, if that was indeed what she wanted?

She frequently calls attention to that time in her past when she worked as a newspaper reporter. It's introduced at key moments to bolster her own and her reader's confidence in her as a "serious person" apart from motherhood. While conflict between family and career must be a given headache for most women today, Maynard is quick to try to smother her doubts as soon as she voices them. It's a little schizzy, and meanwhile the dismay is audible beneath the homilies. But it's impossible not to have a certain degree of sympathy for this confused Angel in the House. However poorly she's handling motherhood (and we have her word on that), and however smug she somehow simultaneously permits herself to be—still, despite her Pangloss mask, Maynard is palpably miserable. In an afterword to this collection, she says:

> I got a letter the other day from a reader of my newspaper column—a man, 38 years old, married a few years. "I've been reading stories about your family life every week now for a few months," he wrote. "And I wanted to tell you . . . that made me decide, once and for all, to get a vasectomy."

It's to her credit that she tells the story on herself—but it echoed this reader's sentiments exactly. Maynard is no advertisement for procreation. In choosing the '50s model, she has chosen even more than the standard '50s apportionment of rage. Hers is motherhood with a vengeance, the anger massed behind the smiles—syrup poured over a rock.

There is nothing inherently amiss in newspaper columns about private lives. But it is curious, is it not, that the process is so self-selecting, that those who choose thus to reveal themselves often seem to lack the self-understanding that would make their lives, their dilemmas, and their observations of real value to their readers. In Maynard's case, it is the woolliness of her self-knowledge, coupled with the burden of acute self-consciousness, that militates against what might otherwise be real writing. Certainly the fluency is there; but though glimmers of something else do occasionally peep through, it is the fluency of hackery.

NAN GOLDIN'S photographs in *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* depict men and women who belong to another kind of family, the extended octopuslike configuration characteristic of bohemias—in this case, downtown New York City (with guest appearances by a few European capitals), circa 1976-86.

These snapshots are often claustrophobic and intrusive. According to the conventional standards by which Goldin was raised (in Silver Spring, Maryland), the activities depicted here—including, though certainly not limited to, bathing, pissing, drugging, and fucking—are sensationalist. But there is no voyeur's distance between this photographer and her subjects, and several photos include Goldin herself. As she explains in her moving, if somewhat muddled, introduction, this is her keepsake album. It's her daily diary.

Since the book is a collection of intense personal portraits that taken together compose a broad social portrait of a time and place, it is difficult to approach these images on purely formal grounds. Nevertheless, it must be said that many of the pictures are spectacular, virtuosic. Take "Bea with the blue drink." Three people sit around a café table on which a wine glass glows fluorescent blue, as if lit from within, like the glass of milk in *Suspicion*. On a neighboring tumbler a half-moon wedge of lemon perches, flat white—as are the plastic white glasses frames stuck like an exoskeleton on "Bea" 's face. The room is stained with flesh-tones and shit-tones, and in the far dark background, straight out of a Venetian interior by Sargent, a single patch of daylight, like a daub of white paint, glows. Goldin's control of these qualities is remarkable in this perfect evocation of a single stone-cold sober moment from an afternoon otherwise awash on a sea of blue booze.

Many of her photos catch that special, sickening moment when the fog lifts and things are suddenly and horribly plain. Playing against the starkness of her vision are Goldin's darkly romantic accoutrements—the props, the lights, the colors. "Brian" 's face appears often here, nearly always with the same challenging, somber gaze aimed like a gun at the lens. In "Brian with the Flintstones," his face is clouded by the blue mist off a TV screen, and Fred Flintstone's goofy mug parodies Brian's—here in a vulnerable, slack-jawed moment. Nothing about this unhappy double portrait succumbs to the possible camp of the cartoon's presence.

The subject of "Vivienne in the green dress" is the dress, a wall of dense green that seems to have crowded its wearer (a sort of butch Lulu) into an aquamarine corner. Its counterpart in "The Hug" is a bluer-than-blue dress, in this case subju-

ROCK CREEK CEMETERY: WASHINGTON, D.C.

He supposed its meaning to be the
one commonplace about it—

Henry Adams on *Grief*,
Saint-Gaudens's memorial
to Adams's wife

It is not in Lafayette Park, nor near
the Mall, where the Monument—kneeling down—
is blackened with names, half-buried in earth.

The plot-site, ringed with a crown of holly,
grows in upon itself, like obsession.
Here, you are the third person, singular.

The Virgin, the Dynamo come to Grief:
she sits in a posture impossible
to hold too long. Hooded bronze, shrouded eyes.

We must seek to live two separate lives,
he said, and watched his neighbors purchase pain.
Grief, removed to Lafayette Park, looks on.

PAUL KANE

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gated by a bare, preposterously masculine arm encircling the waist. "Suzanne," another ubiquitous presence in these pictures, always looks different: boyish, vampy, desolate, joyful, chic, exhausted. In "Suzanne in the bathroom," she is contained, concentrating on herself in the mirror while the elaborate Bauhaus geometry of the tiling draws lines in and out of her two heads. The whole is suffused in a deathly yellow afterglow.

But not only are verbal descriptions hopelessly inadequate; it is also misleading to concentrate on individual images. The photos in this book are only a small fraction of the several hundred photos Goldin has for years been exhibiting, with musical accompaniment, as a slide-show performance—also called "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency" (the title of a song from *The Threepenny Opera*). As the images flash by, with the music setting a distinct mood, the sense that Goldin is making a point is unmistakable. Without the benefit of the slide-show experience, that may not be as obvious; but to help out, Goldin has grouped the pictures into sections designated in the table of contents by the titles of their accompanying theme songs. Thus, "This Is a Man's World" introduces a long section of portraits of men; "Downtown" is for a parties series; "Sweet Blood Call" is for a collection of photos of women's bruised and wounded bodies, including Goldin's self-portrait, "Nan after being battered." The title song is reserved for a few macabre images at the end of the book, including a pair of headstones (for a departed married couple) and a photo of a graffiti drawing of skeletons embracing.

So this is no ordinary diary. It is also a thesis. Oddly enough, although the chief accomplishment of many of these photos individually is a special aesthetic chill, en masse they heat up with the anger of Goldin's argument, which goes something like: "Sex is the inevitable bondage, the death-in-the-life that is eternal." Or: "First your parents fuck you, then men fuck you, then death fucks you." And friends provide the solace between sessions in the torture chamber of love. The tension resulting from this attitude is obvious; not even a loose familial community can withstand that sort of anger or that sort of analysis. Every time she takes a shot, Goldin focuses with a cold and angry eye, effectively exiling herself even from this, her adopted family—as all artists must.

There's a strangely lit photo on the dust jacket of Joyce Maynard's book—a portrait of her and her three children, sans husband. It was taken by Benno Friedman, who seems to have used a flash outdoors in the late afternoon light. Mother stands smiling with tightly clenched lips, as she hugs her children close to her. Behind, in the shadows cast by trees, lurks the family house. The picture could be poster art for *The Amityville Horror*.

Meanwhile, a prevailing irony of Goldin's family photo album is the bourgeois nature of the genre itself. ("Cliché" is, after all, the French word for "snapshot.") Goldin ran away from her suburban family at the age of 14, after her beloved older sister committed suicide. She designates her mother and father, iconically and somewhat hatefully, as "The Parents." They haunt this album. Since Goldin is an artist, however, her work thrives on contradictions and confusions. It is important to add that she conveys a great tenderness as well as rage. Goldin dedicated this book to the memory of her late sister, but perhaps she knows that the grief of all families assembles here.

APRIL BERNARD

April Bernard works as a writer and editor in New York City. She has recently written a screenplay adaptation of Jane Bowles's *Two Serious Ladies*.

DO-GOODING

Making Public Policy: A Hopeful View of American Government by Steven Kelman

(Basic Books, 332 pp., $19.95)

In *Making Public Policy*, Steven Kelman offers the most upbeat appraisal of governmental action we have been privy to in some time. He believes in public spirit, and the subtitle proclaims "a hopeful view." The amalgam of liberal resolve and Reagan-era mania for good cheer suggests two different ways of reading this book. Taken at face value, Kelman has fashioned a brief for a mature liberalism that is devoted to the expert management of the public sphere. Considered more skeptically, he has produced an apology for a demure managerialism that would replace the pursuit of justice with a cult of administration. This much is clear: despite Kelman's constant refrain that his arguments are unfashionable, they are right in tune with the current consensus of Democratic neoliberalism.

Making Public Policy offers a tonic to tired liberals looking to persuade the public, or even themselves, that government can work, and who, up to now, have had to rely on invocations of Head Start in pleading their case. Kelman's mission is to bring the glad tidings to all manner of doubters: left-wingers who see America run by cabals of businessmen, the dour members of the Grace Commission who wrote that tendentious report on government waste, right-wing atavists who want America to revert to a stateless society, and muckraking journalists who fuel misguided suspicions of government by harping on rivets that cost thousands of dollars. Sure there are many failures in public policy, but in business, Kelman informs us, for every single idea that comes to profitable fruition in a junk bond or Cuisinart, 57 other ideas fall by the wayside. True, political action committees connive to buy votes, but legislators and policy-makers mainly do what they think is right, not what is venal. Indeed, political discussion is virtually a model of rational learning. All in all, says Kelman, "The role the government plays in our lives is more worthy of admiration and faith than of dislike and cynicism."

What follows is a civics primer on the policy process, as viewed from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. The considerable virtue of this approach is that it avoids heavy doses of ideological preachment, the better to concentrate on close-up studies of the specific institutions that, to use Kelman's professional lingo, produce and distribute

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policy. In line with this organizational perspective, Kelman gives us crisp and clear, if somewhat dry, discussions of Congress, the Civil Service, the presidency, and the Supreme Court. Along the way, there is much talk of institutional design, congressional staffers' work loads, standard operating procedures, human resource management, incubation periods and policy streams, even something called "the diminishing astonishment principle" (the first time you see something amazing, you are amazed; the next time you see it, you are less amazed).

None of this focus on organizational rules and procedures will enthrall the average citizen, but it does offer a caution to those who talk of policy as if it were a seamless unity. Even more to the point, a mastery of these grubby details is required to build a decent and just society. After all, when things go awry in social policy, derailment may owe less to some general incapacity of government than to the minutiae of administration. This is why Kelman's diagnosis is, in many respects, the happy converse of the neoconservative fear of unanticipated consequences: he has faith that professionals can use their knowledge to increase their ability to anticipate. This attention to the details of policy contains a tacit warning to liberals: avoid reckless dreaming. Most of Kelman's recommendations for improving society—make assistant secretaries career officers, not appointees; devise performance standards for civil servants to enhance productivity—follow from his conviction that the policy process as it now exists is a given and fundamentally sound. Such tinkering as is necessary to improve it will issue from seasoned expertise.

KELMAN IS engaged in more than detached appraisal of government. He is out to vindicate a particular view of social life that is no less sunny than his view of public policy. All the asides on public spirit scattered through the first two-thirds of the book form a prelude to the final third, in which he launches a polemic against those social scientists who view political activity solely as an effort to maximize self-interest. This materialism offends Kelman's sense of the fundamental altruism of politicians and policy-makers. Only in this more theoretical portion of the book does Kelman's prose become a shade animated. "Although the stereotype would have it that journalists are a bit wild," he says, "whereas academics are sober or even dull, in fact the zaniest of the theories about the domination of self-interest over the policy-making process have been concocted not in the newsroom but in the classroom." To put this nutty notion of self-interest in its place, Kelman highlights three measures of public spirit. First, ideas consistently overcome interests in determining public choices; how else to explain the spate of deregulation during the 1970s and '80s in industries with highly organized producer groups, who had benefited from rules that made it hard for new corporations to enter the fray? Second, the stands citizens take are driven by their general ideas about right and wrong; thus, in assessing a president, voters are often more concerned with how well the economy is doing generally than with how well they are doing personally. Third, politicians seem to act with public spirit; they could reap greater financial gains in the private sector, and Kelman is impressed that in their self-reports top federal appointees stress the rewards of making the world a better place.

I have a great deal of sympathy with Kelman's effort to establish the moral basis of political behavior. The task is not easy. After all, the rhetorical advantage lies with the proponents of interests, who affect the posture of tough-minded rigor and sophisticated cynicism. Meanwhile, the boosters of noble values can sound downright sappy. Take Jewish liberalism: Is it a moral vision, or merely a shrewd computation of "what's good for the Jews" over the long-term—that particularism, to use Milton Himmelfarb's adage, that likes to think of itself as universalism? By that logic, Jews support rights for others primarily for reasons of nervous self-protection, hoping, as they say, that what goes around—in this case rights—will come around. Or, maybe all those secular Jewish liberals and earnest rabbis who participated in the civil rights movement really did what they did so they could feel they were truly noble, and superior to the vast majority of American immoralists. Get it? They were maximizing resources of self-regard. In reality, of course, once you begin to extend the notion of self-interest beyond cash to include an interest in honor, self-esteem, and moral satisfaction, then "interest" becomes as sloppy and all-embracing and predictively meaningless as "values." In any case, it is true that moral values are notoriously difficult to pin down with any precision. By taking a stab at marshaling some evidence for his claim about public spirit, Kelman has made an important contribution to the scholarly debate.

MAKING PUBLIC POLICY is full of sharp insights and good arguments, but in the final analysis the parts do not add up to a satisfying whole. Despite the preoccupation with the guts of policy, the discussion has a curiously disembodied quality. Kelman's emphasis on public policy as a problem of efficient management by disinterested civil servants gives his argument an abstracted, even naive, quality. More critically, the rhetorical structure of the book, organized around a struggle between the abstractions of egoism and idealism, further removes the discussion from reality. It is hard to know what to make of pronouncements of such breathless generality as "The story of government growth in the 1960s and of its limitation in the 1980s, then, are both stories of the power of ideas." True enough, but they are stories of many other things as well. The problem is that Kelman treats these notions as if they floated in a social void, carried by Platonic guardians of the public spirit. He thereby lifts "ideas" out of their historical context, in which contending groups, many of them located outside the policy process and government institutions, vie for power, benefits, and respect, run up against the state, and in the process change their conceptions of justice. Unfortunately, instead of recognizing the vital links between moral notions and practical life, Kelman radically separates those two spheres. As a result, his welcome attack on extreme theories of rational choice becomes a sublime idealism that denies history and cleanses public policy of power and politics.

Kelman's earnest view of political life appears most clearly in his criteria for good government. One standard is whether the policy-making process produces good public policy. A second is whether the process builds "our dignity and our character," for government should be a school for "teaching the inclination to behave ethically, for molding character in our everyday lives." The moment you try to make these standards concrete, however, they become elusive phantoms. Take the first

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criterion: Does the policy-making process produce good public policy? According to Kelman, good public policy is characterized by the presence of "a significant level of public spirit," and he defines that lofty stuff as "an honest effort to achieve good public policy." Translating the tacit syllogism gives you this vaporous near-tautology: good public policy is characterized by an honest effort to achieve good public policy. By such a reckoning, banning abortion or protecting it, expanding the welfare state or trashing it, all might qualify equally as good public policy, so long as the proponents were pure of heart. One can't help but wonder how Oliver North would fare on this test of public spirit.

Making Public Policy embodies the timeless dilemma of all those Croly-type variants of American liberalism that hold salvation to lie in the fusion of rational procedure and righteous intention. Kelman defines the common good without reference to any substantive standards, any particular conceptions of justice. His public spirit is much like the vision that neoliberals are always trumpeting, and like the civic virtue affirmed by some communitarian critics of American individualism: both are devoid of content, as if any old values or vision will do. Vision may serve a real electoral requirement of contemporary liberalism: to show that it has soul, that it can match Reagan in tapping the public's longing for good news about the future, and that it has some moral grounding, or, more precisely, the appearance of morality. Analogously, in *Making Public Policy*, "public spirit" serves to humanize what is essentially the managerial ethos of policy professionals and to avoid all those nasty distributive issues that are raised when you attempt to translate pious hopes into actual policies. Vision and public spirit thus share a similar fate; if they are not filled with content, they become empty platitudes.

Kelman is too smart not to realize that his refusal to take a stand on particulars in defining good policy is untenable; he is left to plead lamely, "It is . . . very much in the tradition of previous efforts to evaluate how well the policy-making process works." His criteria, which he admits are "modest," tilt conclusions about American society toward a self-congratulatory optimism that is not only unwarranted, but barely able to suppress the resignation beneath it. That resignation is so strong that it creeps into the subtitle of his conclusion, "The Only Government We've Got," in which his minimalist conclusion that American society "works pretty well" is carried mainly by evidence such as the absence of police knocking at our doors, extended economic prosperity (there is little mention of its uneven nature), and the lack of starvation (where are the homeless hidden in Boston?). But surely one can imagine more demanding standards without succumbing to utopianism. Nor is it impossible to admit all the good works that government has accomplished and still point to the glaring failures, not least of all in the realm of race and poverty, and the suffering that attends them.

It is only by averting his eyes and lowering his expectations about government that Kelman can maintain his cheeriness. And even that, it turns out, is tenuous. Too much airing of doubts about the high-flown quality of our government, Kelman worries, and things would look the way those zany skeptics and utilitarians have been saying they are all along. The edifice of government, in Kelman's vision, is sustained

> by norms that prescribe public spirit in politics. Those norms work against powerful forces of self-interest in human nature, and they can be very fragile. The danger exists that a cynical description of a political world based on self-interest can itself serve to undermine these norms and thus become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The fear that unbridled criticism will drain the state of legitimacy is of a piece with other features of Kelman's argument—the lowered expectations, the "realism," the banishment of race and inequality from policy discussion, the buoyant rhetoric of spirit, the primacy of values of efficiency. None of these things is necessarily inconsistent with liberalism, nor do they overshadow Kelman's essential humanism. But taken together, they suggest that liberalism has learned too much from the Reagan years.

JONATHAN RIEDER

Jonathan Rieder, associate professor of sociology at Yale University, is the author of *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Harvard University Press).

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Diet Tips Of The Saints

Holy Anorexia
by Rudolph M. Bell

(University of Chicago Press, 248 pp., $22.50, $11.95 paper)

Holy Feast and Holy Fast:
The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women
by Caroline Walker Bynum

(University of California Press, 444 pp., $29.95)

"Holy Anorexia" sounds like something Robin would say to Batman in a pinch. The application of "holy" to almost any improbably mundane noun is funny, which is why the campy duo does it, but sanctity and anorexia are particularly incongruous: they seem disparate both in social context and in time, the age of saints having drawn to a close long before the eating disorder began to afflict the daughters of the haute bourgeoisie. Still, Rudolph Bell contends, the two are not only closely related, but essentially the same: the phenomenon that was interpreted as a mark of exemplary holiness in late medieval and early modern Europe was simply reclassified in the 19th century as a medical condition, and was transformed in the popular imagination from something wondrous into something pitiful.

Clare of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Veronica Giuliani, Margaret of Cortona, Angela of Foligno, and others from the 13th century through the 15th century were all "holy anorexics," according to Bell, women of disturbed backgrounds in the throes of what we now consider a personality dysfunction. He reaches this conclusion by comparing the details of their personal lives and their relationship to food with modern medical definitions and descriptions of anorexia.

There is no doubt that some of them exhibited some bizarre behavior. Catherine of Siena reduced her diet to bread, uncooked vegetables, and water as a teenager, and as an adult reportedly took nothing but water and bitter herbs (which she spit out, except when she was ordered by spiritual directors to consume food, in which case she became violently ill and vomited it back up). Veronica Giuliani ate no ordinary food, but did consume cat vomit and licked the walls of her cell with her tongue, swallowing dirt and spiders in the process. Catherine of Genoa was for 23 years unable to eat at all during Lent, or for the 40 days before Christmas.

Are these instances of anorexia nervosa, misattributed by contemporaries to religious fervor? I have my doubts. In the first place, modern definitions of anorexia are so diffuse and vague that almost any peculiarly abstemious eating pattern could be given the name, in which case the application of the concept "anorexia" to the past is much less interesting than it appears at first. But even if one applies a broad definition, the differences often outweigh the similarities. How many modern anorexics drink the bloody pus of sick people to whom they administer? How many flog themselves three times a day? Spend the night in prayer? One can argue, of course, that these are the ancient equivalents of the things modern anorexics do in addition to starving themselves, but a mutatis mutandis of this kind makes the categories so permeable that they can barely hold an idea. If the point is simply that bizarre religious practices of the past may have been responses to what we now consider neuroses, the argument is true, important, and obvious, and it should be expanded to include many other psychological disorders evident in the same individuals. Seizing on Catherine's eating habits, as opposed to the many other weird facts of her masochistic spiritual regime, seems capricious; other aspects of her behavior are also neurotic by modern standards, but they do not resemble anorexia.

Bell himself, moreover, dismisses the fasting of males such as St. Simeon, who provided all of the earliest Christian archetypes of the practice, as clearly not a form of anorexia. The men were exercising choice, he contends, while the women were actually unable to eat. Like much of his interpretation of the sources, this is a highly questionable inference. Except in very few cases, we are dependent for information about "ability" and "choice" on the observations of contemporary observers or later biographers, not on the subjects themselves; and few forms of historical writing are as formulaic and treacherous as hagiography, or have been so consistently manipulated to suit non-historical agendas. Both the devotees and the enemies of all the saints in the book had ample reason, as Bell himself notes, to distort the facts they reported, and he has no difficulty dismissing some material as patently exaggerated (for example, stories about how much Catherine slept, or could lift). This makes it puzzling that Bell accepts at face value nearly every description he encounters of unusual eating habits, even when they seem more fantastic than other details he has rejected as unlikely.

Although Bell's book is a work of substantial intelligence and ingenuity, and not intended to reduce religious experience to some crude psychoanalytic category, a great many objections might be raised to its thesis. This would be pointless, however, because Caroline Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* raises the discussion to a new and higher plane. From her loftier view the entire question looks rather different. Bynum surveys the importance of food as a spiritual concern generally in Christian thought, the special social relationship of women to food in the Middle Ages, and the unique qualities of female spirituality itself in later medieval Europe. The book is dazzling, an education not only about food as a spiritual aspect of European culture but also about the role of gender in Western religious experience and, perhaps most important, about how to write elegant, subtle history from texts in which few others have found anything important or revealing. Bynum can wring startling insights from familiar liturgical commonplaces and from casual statements by little-known women mystics, as well as from the writings of great theologians.

Anorexia is only a small part of Bynum's theme. When it is introduced in the final third of the book, the reader is already in a much better position to appreciate its possible significance than at any point in *Holy Anorexia*. Bynum sensibly points out, for example, that whether or not the medical concept of anorexia can be applied to medieval women depends on which of the many modern diagnostic descriptions one adopts. Moreover, our

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knowledge of medieval cases is generally too fragmentary to afford any diagnostic precision for premodern figures. Bynum is, all the same, willing to suggest that at least Catherine of Siena "can be said to be, in the modern sense, anorectic or even bulimic." The "modern sense" is apparently Hilde Bruch's definition of anorexia, which Bynum cites: "self-inflicted starvation in the absence of recognizable organic disease and in the midst of ample food."

THE POSSIBILITY that great saints were "anorexic" raises a tantalizing question about holiness itself, a subject that has attracted considerable attention lately—from Michael Goodich in *Vita Perfecta: The Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (1982) and Richard Kieckheffer in *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (1984). If, as both Bell and Bynum acknowledge, anorexia arises from an organic cause not yet recognized, or is a psychological disorder beyond the control of the sufferer, does this render meaningless as moral activity the "fasting" of saints who exhibit anorexic behavior? Should we conclude that they had no choice, that their actions were not heroic virtue at all, but simply the natural functioning of their peculiar metabolisms or neuroses?

Alain Cavalier's recent film *Thérèse*, about a 19th-century mystic given to feats of asceticism, hints at something like this, suggesting in its structure, and in the articulated opinions of some of the other nuns, that what would be great sacrifices for some women were simply aspects of Thérèse's character, that holiness was "easy" for her. (This does not undermine their admiration for her.) It is not really clear whether the sanctity of holy persons is rendered more or less remarkable if it is understood to be "natural" rather than acquired by struggle and choice.

The question rests on theologically difficult issues about "gifts" from God, and to some extent on an infrequently recognized distinction between the "sacred" and the "holy." A thing is sacred because of its character, which makes it different from its surroundings, but which is not necessarily acquired by or in moral struggle; it is holy, by contrast, through acts of the will. Shamans are sacred: they have an innate quality that enables them to see and do things ordinary people would not. Even places—groves or mountains—can be sacred to pagan deities, because they, too, can possess a character peculiarly apposite to the being in question. But this is not meritorious on the part of the sacred thing; it is simply a fact about it, a fact that inspires reverence in others.

The Christian concept of "holiness," on the other hand, usually involves the transformation, by dint of virtue or God's grace, of what is by nature not different—the ordinary, the fallen, the sinful—into something that is morally better. It may then be sacred. Saints are traditionally held up as exemplary, however, not because they are by nature better than the rest of us, but because they are by nature just like us and have made themselves better. If saints fasted because they were anorexic, this "heroine-from-everywoman" quality would be diminished, and at most saints would be more like shamans or clairvoyants: they would be innately gifted (or disturbed, depending on one's point of view), rather than victors in a moral struggle.

Actually, this notion of a special giftedness has always been one aspect of sainthood in Christian thought, in a way not unrelated to the role of the "sacred" in other religions, but it has not always been perceived clearly by Christians. Saints have their special gifts, which make them patrons of humans who ask their help, in the way that places or things or deities had some special role in Greco-Roman paganism. One saint is black or an Indian; others (especially virgins) are martyred in particularly striking ways; another is a sailor or is used by God to heal throats. These are not moral triumphs. They are accidents of character or circumstance, which sanctity then makes exemplary, so that black people can look to this saint, those with throat problems to that one, those perishing at sea to another, and so on.

In this context, it would not undermine the religious value of Catherine's peculiar eating habits if she were shown to have been in the grip of a "condition," whether organic or psychological. She would be the archetype of anorexic sanctity. And as Bynum eloquently shows, exemplary figures in this realm of human life should be of paramount spiritual importance, because the religious significance of eating and drinking has been primary in Christianity since the time of Jesus, who changed water to wine as his first miracle, fed his followers in the desert, and shared himself as feast in the ultimate and eternal sacrifice. Whether or not Catherine was diagnostically "anorexic" is trivial, then, compared with the importance of her life as an embodiment of themes about the use and meaning of food in the Christian religion.

This line of thought might also cast some light on why so many saints devote themselves to flamboyant self-denial or to mortification, rather than to the doing of practical good for others, as Jesus did. Wouldn't feeding the poor be more Christ-like than starving oneself? A skeptic might reply that religion appeals to neurotic personalities, and extreme "religious" observance is likely to be quite neurotic, including forms of masochism, anorexia, abnormal states of consciousness, and so forth. The sophisticated believer will hardly doubt that

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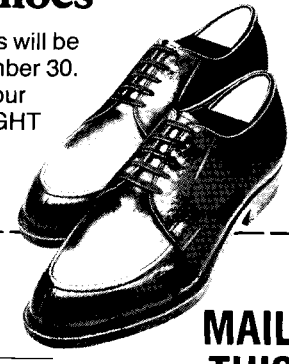

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religion attracts neurotics: Why should it not appeal to all types of humans? A theological response could suggest that saints given to such extreme behavior are the holy among the neurotic portion of the population, using their afflictions to praise God; the saintly among the psychologically ordinary are less noticeable, as are the ordinary of every sort.

An important and fascinating question suggested (but never addressed) in Bynum's book revolves around the interaction of food, gender, ethic, and culture at the level of whole religious systems. Both Judaism and Christianity began in the Middle East, and both started out with congeries of eating and sexual restrictions that set their adherents apart, and that constituted patterns of quotidian obedience to the deity they worshipped. (Jewish dietary regulations are familiar. For comparable early Christian concerns, there is, for example, the apostolic dispute over clean and unclean foods, chronicled in Acts 10-15; the resolution, instigated by a vision afforded to Peter, involved a modified dietary regime.) In Europe, however, while Judaism retained and enhanced its emphasis on the kitchen—which was ruled by women—as a locus of religious fidelity, institutional Christianity moved the central drama of moral activity to the bedroom, whose threshold the leaders of the church were themselves ultimately forbidden to cross.

Christian culture in the West, ethically controlled by celibate males, appears to have been overwhelmingly preoccupied with sexual restraint as the test of religious obedience: total abstinence for the totally committed, elaborate and detailed constraints for the population at large. Many of these prescriptions seem as arbitrary to the outside observer as the laws of *kashrut* seem to non-Jews. Fasting, at least at the most obvious level, was comparatively trivial. "Immorality" would almost never be understood by Christians of any age as applying to the functions of the mouth or the stomach: it is automatically imputed to the genitals, and to their psychological accomplices.

Bynum's book makes me wonder whether this picture of Western Christian religious experience, accurate in terms of the extant sources, is not to some extent an illusion, created by the fact that the vast majority of written records were composed by males. If sexuality is more often an important issue of self-control for males than for females, men may have left a rather distorted picture of "Christian spirituality." Thomas Aquinas probably observed faithfully the Dominican rules of chastity, but he was enormously overweight as an adult and apparently ate heartily. Would Catherine have said that he had gotten his priorities wrong, that he was not pursuing a life of genuine asceticism? In fact many males did object vehemently to the gastric asceticism of Catherine and others, who were often harassed, ordered by authorities to desist from this form of spiritual exercise, or accused of heresy and witchcraft.

Both Bynum and Bell make a point also raised by some modern writers about anorexia: that women are not free in most societies to organize their lives as they wish, and therefore have to work with those areas actually under their control. In particular, they have little say over either wealth or sexuality, the traditional cruxes of self-restraint and holy identity in Christian thought. They could not easily dedicate their lives to charitable activities in much of premodern Europe; even their marriage partners were often chosen for them in the Middle Ages, and they were required by Christian law to fulfill the "marriage debt." Anorexia was a way of exerting dominance over themselves and the world by regulating the appetite left to their direction.

There may be some truth to this, but it seems to me a dangerously one-sided and rather patronizing view, to assume that sexuality is the paramount and natural arena of asceticism; women only choose food as a spiritual focus faute de mieux, a passive adjustment to the preempting of erotic restraint by the males who rule sexuality. Of course it is possible that for many Christians, and perhaps especially for Christian women, food was a more fundamental embodiment and crux of spiritual life than was semen. The fact that women, admitted on sufferance to the institutional church, could rarely afford to criticize the patriarchy means that few opposing views are likely to appear in ecclesiastical or theological records. Still, historians must not confuse the writings of the almost exclusively male power elite with "Christian spirituality" as a real-life phenomenon. Bynum's book helps us to conceive a more complete Christian religious experience, in which the preoccupations of the celibate clergy are not necessarily the obsessions of the entire Christian populace, in which the values of women—often focused on what nourishes and sustains people rather than on what reproduces them—appear more prominently.

JOHN BOSWELL

John Boswell is the author most recently of *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press).

PRAIRIE TALES

Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice
by Sharon O'Brien

(Oxford, 464 pp., $24.95)

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edited by Sharon O'Brien

(Library of America, 1,336 pp., $27.50)

"Sword/penis/pen/male/artist." In Sharon O'Brien's biography of Willa Cather, this cluster of associations is her shorthand for the dominantly masculine character of the Western literary tradition. The inexorable evolution of sword into novel describes the misbegotten influence that a literary woman must repudiate, in O'Brien's view, before she can find and trust the feminine voice that is truly her own. In this approach to literary biography, gender is the overwhelmingly crucial factor in the development of a female writer. When the woman can disown the disabling pressure of male authority, and reject the false dichotomy of femininity and creativity decreed by a patriarchal culture, she has won the decisive battle; and the most interesting part of her ca-

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reer, for the feminist critic, is over.

For this reason, O'Brien ends her account of Cather's life in 1913, with the publication of Cather's second novel, *O Pioneers!*, when her vision for the first time was presumably unclouded by such overbearing masculine models as Henry James. Though Willa Cather lived on until 1947, and wrote her finest novels—*My Ántonia*, *A Lost Lady*, and *The Professor's House*—in the years after 1913, O'Brien has concentrated on the slow process of self-discovery that she calls "the emerging voice." The way a writer arrives at his or her literary identity can be a fascinating subject, of course, and O'Brien explores Cather's long apprenticeship with intense care and intelligence. But whether the feminist obsession with the role of gender in literature offers a fresh and persuasive illumination of Cather's work and life is another matter.

IN RECENT years the premise that there is an innate distinction between male and female sensibilities has become an axiom of feminist literary theorists. Though they are committed to the goal of undifferentiated equality in the economic, social, and political spheres, they do not extend this ideal to the intellect and the imagination. Because they believe that the mind of a woman is demonstrably different from the mind of a man, they insist that it is not only the cultural and social experience of subordination but the biological and psychological character of the female that accounts for the special qualities of feminine writing. For them, a woman cannot be simply a writer; she must be a "woman writer."

It is intriguing to compare the current separatism upheld by feminist critics with the militant stand taken by Kate Millett almost 20 years ago. Both Millett's *Sexual Politics* and O'Brien's biography started out as doctoral dissertations in English literature, but they have little else in common. Millett's tract, published in 1970, in the early days of the women's movement, raged against any emphasis on the differences between the sexes; such a distinction, she argued, was a sinister reinforcement of masculine domination. Indeed, Millett's book ignored female writers altogether, and aimed its polemical assault at male novelists who degraded women: D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer. O'Brien, on the other hand, seeks to demonstrate that "as long as Cather denied her womanhood she was unable to speak authentically and powerfully as a writer," an idea Millett would have rejected out of hand.

What is also notable about the shift in feminist attitudes since 1970 is the apparent change of heart about Freud and the critical value of psychoanalytic thought. For Millett, Freud was the archenemy: he "rationalized" the intellectual superiority of men and "validated" patriarchal ideology by investigating the temperamental and intellectual differences of women. But O'Brien's rubric of "sword/penis/pen/male/artist" is oddly derivative of that long-gone age of innocence when Freudian literary critics saw a phallic symbol in every banana and hysterical repression in every sigh. O'Brien is not that simple-minded. Still, in contrast to Millett's intransigent denunciation of Freud and all his works, she readily incorporates some aspects of psychoanalytic thinking about men, women, and literature into her elaborate theoretical framework. Millett would have been drawn and quartered before using the term "preoedipal" as freely as O'Brien does.

IN DEFENSE of her thesis that Cather's life and work up to age 40 enacted a struggle between the woman and the writer, O'Brien has drawn upon a huge trove of psychoanalytic and feminist work by psychologists, historians, and sociologists, as well as literary critics: Nancy Chodorow on mothers and daughters, Carol Gilligan on the "different voice" of women's moral development, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar on 19th-century women poets and novelists, Anthony Storr on the sources of art in childhood experience, and Gaston Bachelard's ruminations on "the poetics of space." A very heavy load of theory for a novelist whose genius was rooted in the rural earth of the ordinary that defined her sense of place.

At the core of O'Brien's concern with Cather's emerging voice is the puzzle of her long apprenticeship. Although she published two books in her early 30s—a volume of uninspired poems and a promising but uneven collection of short stories—Cather did not write her first novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, until she was almost 40. And that book was so heavily indebted to Henry James, and gave so feeble a hint of the writer Cather would soon become, that it is omitted from the Library of America volume devoted to Cather's early work. Yet according to O'Brien, Cather proved only one year later, in *O Pioneers!*, that she had finally resolved "the conflict between gender and creativity" that had deflected her talent for so long and inhibited her confidence as a woman writer (emphasis on woman).

While *Alexander's Bridge* is set mainly in New York and London—the metropolises the country girl got to know during her brief, precocious career as managing editor of *McClure's* magazine—*O Pioneers!* grew out of her memories of childhood on the Nebraska Divide. At last she was able to create a strong and independent heroine, the brilliantly able farmer Alexandra Bergson, who proves that anything a man can do a woman does better. The extraordinary speed at which she produced *O Pioneers!* remains hard to fathom, though Cather later said that the novel "wrote itself" after an exhilarating month in the Southwest.

In O'Brien's feminist scheme, there is a hidden significance in the remarkable Alexandra Bergson: she embodies Willa Cather's long-delayed repudiation of "the culturally imposed contradictions between femininity and creativity," and her story is an allegorical self-portrait of the woman artist no longer in thrall to the

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masculine dominion of literature. Even Cather's attachment to the Southwest is forced into the ideological mold. Her enraptured discovery of the landscape and art of the region, which became such a vital force in her later work, undoubtedly helped release the confidence she brought to *O Pioneers!* But O'Brien's dubious assertion that Pueblo Indian craft offered the novelist "an antidote to patriarchal culture" hardly begins to explain the surge of creative power that enabled Cather to write *O Pioneers!* with such rapidity and assurance. What O'Brien slights is the mystery that shrouds any sudden eruption of artistic strength, and no amount of feminist theory can unriddle that phenomenon.

THERE WAS far more richness and variety in Cather's personality and work than can be grasped from O'Brien's tireless ideological refrain about the polarity of male tradition and the individual female talent. Both Cather's life and work flowed westward in the bloodstream of American history. Born in Virginia in 1873, she was the eldest of seven children in a typically extended Southern family, full of storytelling grandmothers and aunts. The great upheaval of her childhood, which gave her the place and the people she made her own as a novelist, was the family's move, when she was nine years old, from Virginia to the Nebraska Divide, the raw prairie vastness where the Cathers lived for several years before settling for good in the little town of Red Cloud.

It was the surrounding emptiness of the prairie, with its isolated immigrant farms, that remained the undying image of the westering migration for young Willa, who in time bore lyrical witness to the fortitude of the displaced Europeans planting new lives in hopeful defiance of the soil and the seasons:

> The homesteads were few and far apart; here and there a windmill gaunt against the sky, a sod house crouching in a hollow. But the great fact was the land itself, which seemed to overwhelm the little beginnings of human society that struggled in its somber wastes.

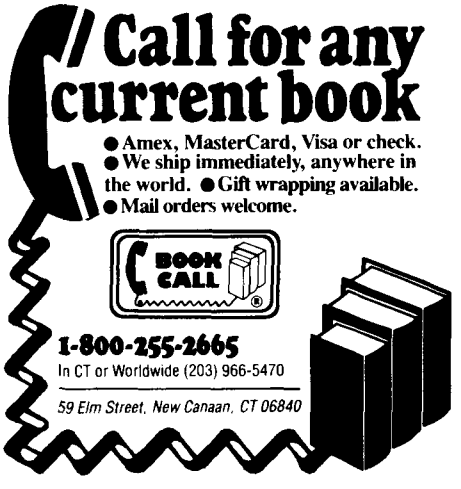
In those "little beginnings" lay the seeds of Willa's art. Her intellectual vitality was quickened in childhood by the many languages and cultures that the immigrants carried with them from the Old World. "On Sunday we could drive to a Norwegian church and listen to a sermon in that language . . . or to a Danish or Swedish church," or hear sermons in French or German or Czech. "Few of our neighbors were Americans—most of them were Danes, Swedes, Norwegian, and Bohemian. . . . I had an enthusiasm for a kind of country and a kind of people." She was endlessly curious about the past these new farmers had left behind, for many of them, as she wrote in *O Pioneers!*, "had never worked on a farm until they took up their homesteads. They had been *handwerkers* at home: tailors, locksmiths, joiners, cigar-makers."

By the time Cather began to write about these pioneers, their lives had become part of her being. And she could portray a world that had its full share of music and sadness, bursting granaries and suicidal despair. In *My Ántonia*, she could balance the tragedy of Mr. Shimerda, cruelly defeated by the hard new country, against the near-mythical ripeness of his daughter Ántonia, who survives to become "a rich mine of life, like the founders of the early races."

Throughout her life, what most powerfully aroused Cather's imagination was her passionate sense of history as heroism. She celebrated the American past as the triumph of adventurous courage over brutally discouraging odds: the immigrant farmers wresting a better life from an alien and hostile environment; larger-than-life men like the redoubtable Captain Forrester, in *A Lost Lady*, who "dreamed the railroads across the mountains"; intellectual pioneers like Professor Godfrey St. Peter, writing his boldly untraditional history of Spanish conquistadores in North America; inventors like St. Peter's protégé, Tom Outland; the intrepid French missionaries in the New Mexican desert.

As Cather and the country grew older, she knew that she was living through "the sunset of the pioneer," the grinding of the heroic spirit under the iron heel of avarice as the age of adventurous nobility came to a close in a country indentured to industrial progress. She was repelled by the technological threat to the spacious majesty of prairie and desert. For her the infinite American landscape was the setting and the source of pioneer heroism, the life force that bound man and nature into an organic unity. And she felt that the land would be desecrated as the frontier plunged into the sea. In her middle years, she turned away with a shudder from the ugliness of 20th-century capitalism, and her imagination burrowed deep into the consoling past as she lent her brilliantly expressive style to the elegiac music of nostalgia: the world of her grandmother, in "Old Mrs. Harris"; the invulnerable faith of the 18th-century Catholic missionaries; the 17th-century French settlers in Canada (*Shadows on the Rock*); and, beyond the measure of time, the primitive dignity of long-vanished Indians whose abandoned village, "preserved in the dry air and almost perpetual sunlight like a fly in amber," Tom Outland discovers in *The Professor's House*.

THERE IS one more grand puzzle. In late adolescence Cather engaged in a prolonged masquerade whose implications O'Brien confronts more honestly and aggressively than any previous biographer has cared to do. From the age of 14 through her first two years at the University of Nebraska, Willa called herself William Cather, cropped her hair, and dressed like a young man—exactly what she appears to be in the photographs of this period. It is clear that this extended male impersonation was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more than an impetuous gesture of adolescent defiance, and this leads inevitably to guesses about Cather's sexual identity. Though earlier accounts of her life did not come right out with the hot-potato word, O'Brien doesn't hesitate to call Cather a lesbian; and her claim seems indisputable. The novelist was, in later life, a stern guardian of her privacy, and saw to it before she died that most of her letters were destroyed. But O'Brien discovered a cache of love letters written to Cather's college friend Louise Pound, plus a wealth of other evidence about her passionate attachments to women, all of which clinches the case about her feelings, if not her actions.

Yet O'Brien's discussion of lesbianism, and of the significance of Cather's sexual leaning, is too loose and baggy. On the one hand she finds the special pleading of Adrienne Rich, who believes "it is the lesbian in us who is creative," too inclusive and extravagant, since Rich's "lesbian continuum" places more emphasis on "woman-defined" interests than on physical intimacy. (By this token every beauty salon is a hive of deviance.) But O'Brien waffles about her own definition of "lesbian," and she is so determined to pull Cather's great mentor, Sarah Orne Jewett, into the sapphic circle that she totally misconstrues that lovely writer's work, and declares that her major subject was "the love between women," as though psychology invariably supersedes imagination. Yes, Jewett did write about women (most of them elderly), but they were placed within her elegiac evocation of a dying world. Her stories arouse the unsentimental pathos of regret for the rotting wharves on the Maine coast, the forsaken up-country farms, the once-tranquil villages invaded by the clattery bustle of textile mills, railroads, and tourists. How can such a tender celebration of a vanished community be reduced to "the love between women"?

The vexing problem with O'Brien's biography is not its claims about Cather's lesbianism. That point, for whatever it's worth, is beyond cavil. But what O'Brien fails to consider is the way (if any) that Cather's sexual identity shaped her work, and its effect on Cather's "feminine voice." The femaleness of a lesbian has a special cast, a different desire, from that of a heterosexual woman, and this difference must surely have influenced Cather's sense of her womanhood. As a particular kind of woman, she cannot be placed, as O'Brien does place her, within an undifferentiated group identity of "the feminine." Even though her creative power may have been released when she came to terms with her lesbianism, this does not mean that the precise content of what she wrote was necessarily affected by that moment of truth.

By concentrating so exclusively on the supposedly female characteristics of a woman writer, feminists overlook the possibility that the differences among individuals are greater than the differences between the sexes. The gender of George Eliot, Edith Wharton, Charlotte Brontë, and Jane Austen does not make them literary sisters writing interchangeable novels about their similar lives as women. Though Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is a sacred text for feminist critics, they slide past the passage in which Woolf declares that "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. . . . It is fatal for a woman . . . in any way to speak consciously as a woman."

Locked into her grand theoretical design, O'Brien insists again and again that the flowering of Cather's genius depended entirely on her consciousness of her sex, and that once she had dramatized that crucial awareness in *O Pioneers!* she could go on to write about other things as well. But lesbian attraction to women was not one of Cather's subjects. And this raises a tricky question: Do we have to know a writer's sexual identity in order to understand his or her work? In our own day, when writers wear their sex on their sleeve, there are no hidden mysteries to probe about the links between life and art. But when the notion that a critic must take a writer's sexual nature into account is applied to novelists of a less permissive time, the problem is more complicated.

Lionel Trilling was faulted for ignoring E. M. Forster's homosexuality in his 1943 book about the novelist. That he simply did not know this fact about Forster is presumably no excuse, yet it is doubtful whether such knowledge would have made a great deal of difference to Trilling's interpretation of Forster's major fiction. (The overtly homosexual novel *Maurice* surfaced many years after Trilling's study.) Neither Forster nor Cather thought of themselves as homosexual writers, and they did not feel any need to sneak furtive allusions into their fiction. As novelists, they sought to re-create a world of experience and a variety of human character beyond their own sexual egos; and it is this transcendence of the self, the wide-ranging play of the genderless imagination, and the power of their language that we value in their work, not the idiosyncrasies of their private being. In breaking off her account of the life and work in 1913, O'Brien has left out the mature, the essential Willa Cather.

The new Library of America volume, skillfully edited by Sharon O'Brien after she completed the biography, includes only Cather's early work, and we must wait for the next volume for her most profound novel, *The Professor's House*, and for the luminous celebration of her beloved New Mexico in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. But in this volume we can see Cather moving with confident authority from the immigrant world of *My Ántonia*, to her passion for music in *The Song of the Lark*, to the astonishingly authentic episodes of military action in *One of Ours*; and we can appreciate how many and various are the stories she could tell. Trust the tale.

PEARL K. BELL

Pearl K. Bell is a writer living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

by the Soviet Union itself." The emphasis is Cohen's, not ours. He emphasizes, too, that the Soviet Union's thinking is also of the militaristic kind, but that is said merely "to make matters doubly worse." Blame America first? Maybe not; but the intellectual and political priorities of these formulations are pretty plain.

INATTENTION SPAN

To the editors:

TRB's July 27 attack on the American sociopolitical attention span ("Time's Up") was right on the mark. In fact, a perfect manifestation of this tendency lies in the same issue, in the Zeitgeist Checklist. AIDS, the disease TRB called "right on schedule—heading for 200,000 fatalities by 1991" on July 27, was no longer part of our zeitgeist, according to the ZC in that issue. But on June 23 AIDS was running strong at No. 2 on the list, 21 weeks on the chart.

JAMES D. HORNFISCHER
Hoboken, New Jersey

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Casey's Boys

THE MOST DISCONCERTING thing I saw in Central America was not the war-wounded or the shanty-dwellers, but the CIA men. These people are supposed to be advising the *contras* on how to act like freedom fighters rather than thugs. Yet they looked to me not like serious people on an important national mission, but like overgrown teenagers dressed up as Bad Actors for bit parts on *Miami Vice* or the centerfold in *Soldier of Fortune*. At a *contra* camp well away from any danger of a Sandinista assault, the Nicaraguan guerrillas themselves were dressed in surplus U.S. camouflage fatigues, and many of them didn't carry weapons. But our CIA boys, obviously allowed their choice of garb and weapons, lurked around looking almost comically conspicuous.

ONE OF THEM had on a black T-shirt, torn Levi's, and a pistol in a small black holster over his rear pants pocket, detective-style. This guy was carefully unshaven in the manner of Don Johnson. All that was missing was mirrored sunglasses. One of his colleagues was wearing shorts and combat boots, with his pistol hanging in a shoulder holster, but no jacket. Yet another of our advisers was dressed in tailored fatigues, more in the spirit of a military enterprise but still made up to look like John Wayne in the movie *Green Berets*. He had a .45 at his side and a rosary around his neck.

IT WASN'T JUST their appearance that bothered me, but what they said. "You know who really knew how to handle this kind of thing, insurgency-counterinsurgency?" "No," I said. "The Guatemalans," he replied. The Guatemalan army was notorious for butchering Indians in the name of anti-communism, I observed. "That's bullshit," he said. "I worked with them. I know. They were effective." In fact, even the State Department's Human Rights Office has reported the opposite. "It is not clear who was responsible for each of the 500 civilian deaths [in 1983]," State reported, "although some were persons clandestinely arrested and then killed by Guatemalan security forces." In the first draft, I'd bet "some" read "many."

WHAT I SAW in Central America did nothing to dispel a theory I've had about the CIA, William Casey, and the *contras*. It's this: when he took over as director in 1981, Casey tried to re-recruit Clandestine Services veterans and paramilitary hands from the Vietnam days who had been retired by Jimmy Carter's DCI, Stansfield Turner. Casey did try to get the best of the old hands to rejoin the agency—I know one of them—but they had better things to do with their lives. So he got the worst, and they are the geniuses responsible for mining Nicaraguan harbors and writing manuals on how to kidnap and kill village leaders and blame it on the Sandinistas. It was these stupid antics that led Congress to cut off aid to the *contras*.

INSPIRED BY CASEY, the CIA has always seen the *contra* program as primarily a military operation, and given short shrift to the political side. The State Department (rather unsuccessfully, until lately) has been trying to put civilians in command of the movement and to emphasize human rights training for the fighters. The idea behind this is that it's impossible to win support from the Nicaraguan people if the *contras* are regarded as Somocistas and commit atrocities. The CIA seems to have figured, let's field an army first and worry about democracy later.

THE IRANAMOK HEARINGS indicate that's of a piece with Casey's attitude toward democracy here at home, too. Whatever stood in the way of fighting communism—Congress, the government bureaucracy, the law—Casey did his best to outwit or ignore. He was a very bright man, though he had the values of an Irish street pug, and he had learned the black arts well as a youthful OSS runner of spies into Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II. The testimony strongly suggests that Iranamok was Casey's scheme, and that Ollie North was Casey's agent. Casey was the kind of man Ronald Reagan would know could get things done without a paper trail. I'd bet authorization was done by a wink.

OLLIE NORTH and Bill Casey thought they were at war, and losing. But in the best testimony given by a government witness, George Shultz said the opposite, and the truth: the United States actually is doing rather well in the world. Hardly anyone wants to be a Marxist anymore, especially those with any experience with Marxism. Down in Latin America and out in Asia, democracies are growing, and the Reagan administration deserves some of the credit. Certainly they've handled El Salvador better than the Democrats managed Nicaragua, and even Guatemala is coming around. But Casey, North, Poindexter, and Reagan apparently didn't believe in their own best case, didn't believe they could go to the people—the colleges, service clubs, and churches—and win public support for their *contra* policy as an adjunct means of promoting democracy by containing communism. The logic suggests that they, as contrasted with the State Department, did not intend the *contras* to be a democratic force, just a fighting one. The result is dead civilians and reports of atrocities.

A NEW REPORT came in late July, written by a group headed by Marta Patricia Baltodano, former head of a Nicaraguan human rights commission who went into exile because of Sandinista abuses. Her report found that the Sandinistas were guilty of far more war crimes than the *contras*. But she still found cases of *contra* killings of civilians, forcible recruitments, and execution of prisoners. So what to do? My friend and co-advocate of *contra* reform, Michael Kramer of *U.S. News and World Report*, recommends firing *contra* commander Enrique Bermudez. But on my trip to Central America, I became convinced that he's an asset, not the problem. A Honduran colonel convinced me by making jokes to a CIA man that Bermudez was too soft to win. Why? Because he fired such "effective" officers as Juan ("Gato") Ribera, a captain in Somoza's National Guard and a pal of Anastasio Somoza's son, Tachito. Bermudez is no liberal, but he's the leader whom the *contra* troops respect. If we want to fire him, we'd best have a better replacement at hand. I have a better suggestion: let's give Casey's replacement, William Webster, a year. If nothing improves, let's fire the CIA.

M. M. K.

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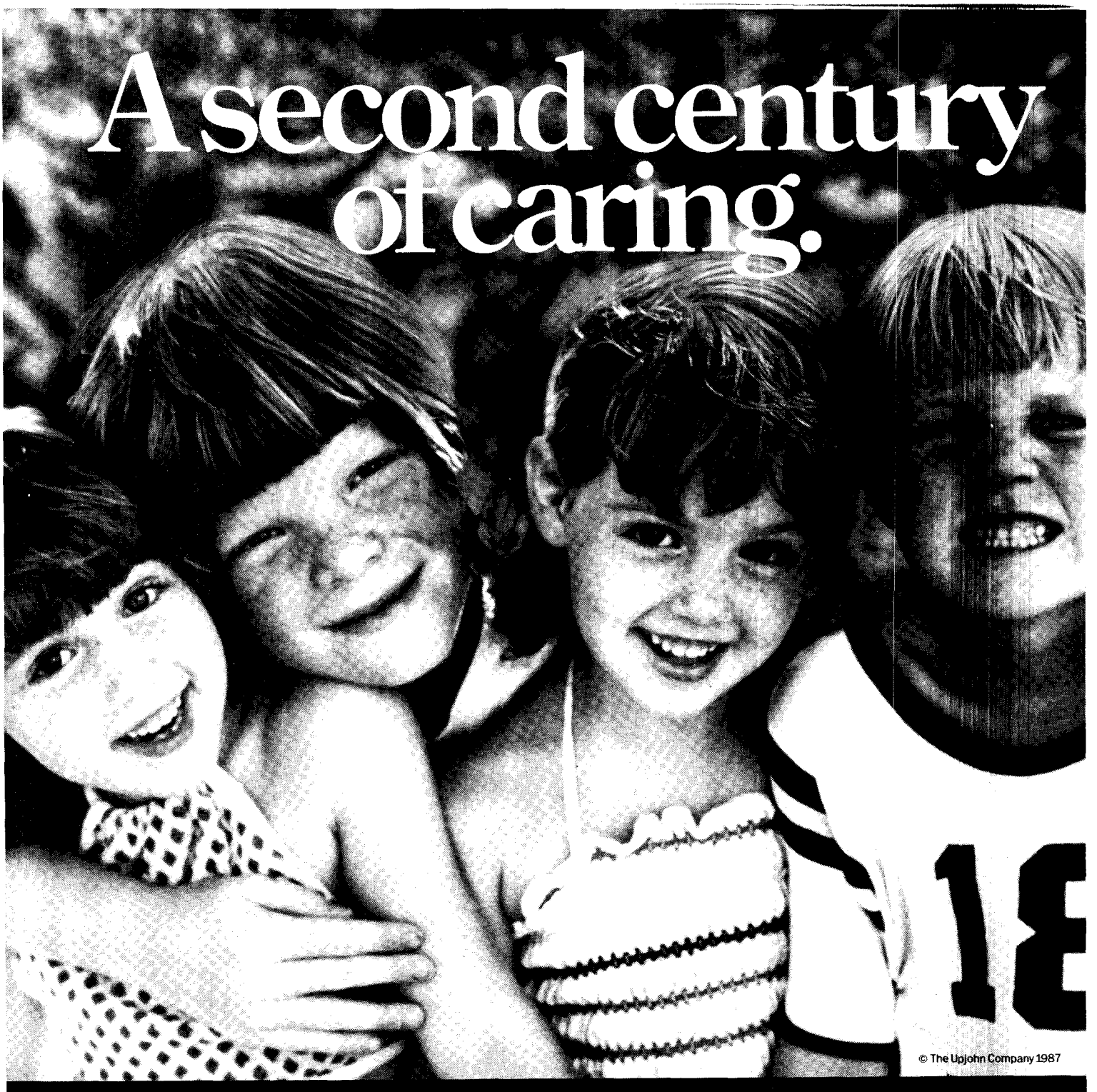

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